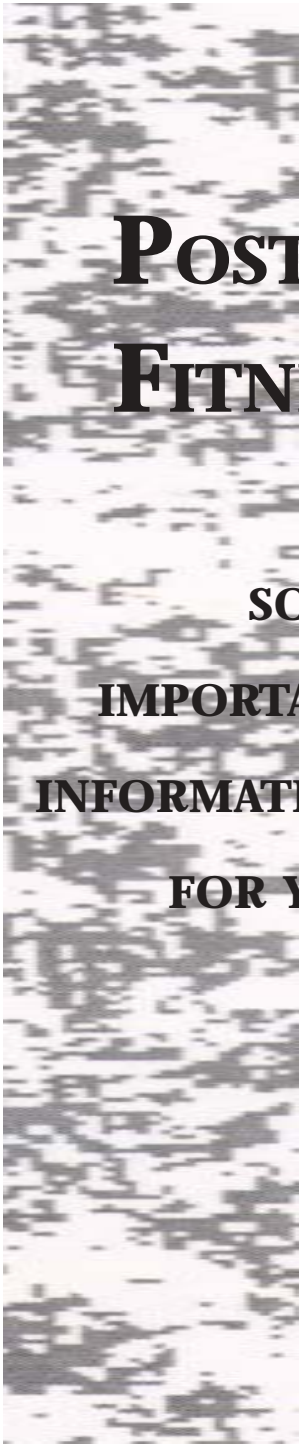


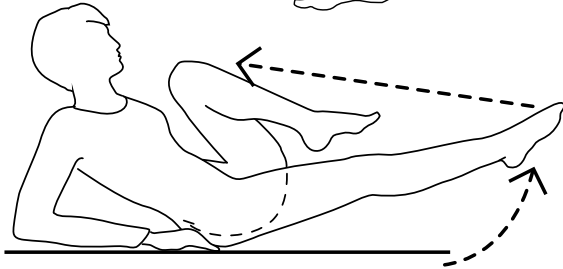
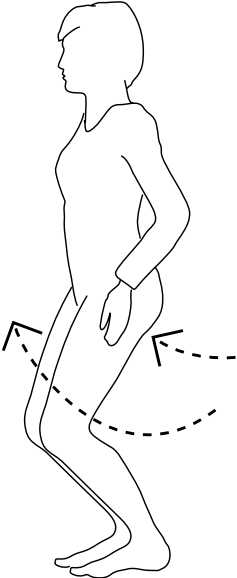
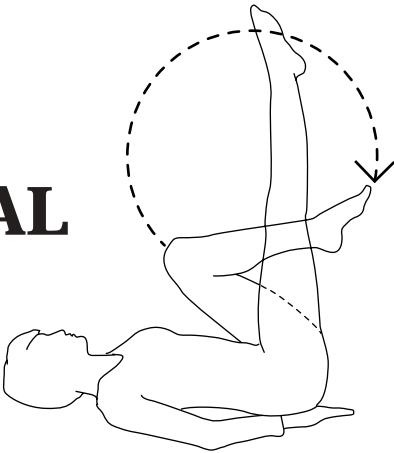
DEVELOPED BY
REGIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION

WRITTEN BY
CONSTANCE REED
BARBARA HEWITT



POSTNATAL FITNESS

**SOME
IMPORTANT
INFORMATION
FOR YOU**



**Postnatal
Fitness**

By Constance Reed

and

Barbara Hewitt

How to get maximum benefits from your exercise program.

- 1.** Set aside a special time each day to do your aerobic activity and exercises. Stick to it. Your routine will become easier with each day's practice.
- 2.** Breathe deeply. Breathing feeds the body with oxygen and offsets tension and exhaustion.
- 3.** Remember your posture: hold your spine straight, lift your head and chest.
- 4.** Never stand with your spine arched. Tuck your buttocks in and under.
- 5.** Whenever you think of it, do your Kegel exercise.

Fitness and good health go hand in hand. Practice daily and you will find the results well worth the effort.

Postnatal Fitness

During your pregnancy, necessary and vital changes occurred in your body to help you prepare for childbirth and nursing. As these changes are very variable, so is the rate at which your body will return to its pre-pregnancy form. The exercises in this pamphlet are designed to help restore muscle tone to the waist, hips, pelvic floor, and stomach. These exercises should be done with a regular aerobic-type activity program, such as walking, cycling or swimming. A regular aerobic program will expend calories, improve body tone and promote cardiovascular fitness.

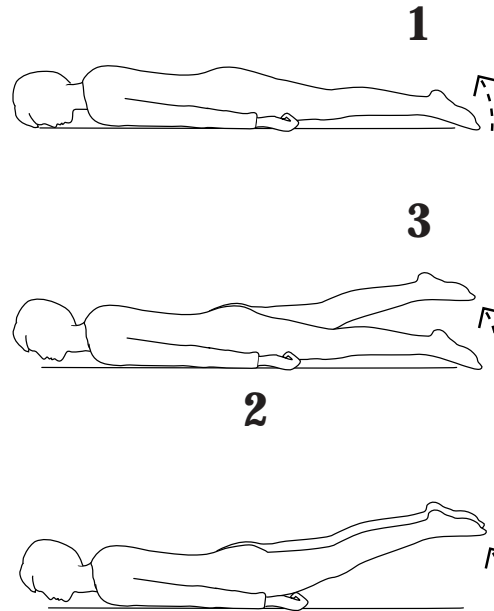
Specific Goals

After pregnancy, you may notice your muscles lack tone, even if your weight has returned to normal. The exercises in this booklet, if done daily, will build strength in your abdomen, hips, pelvic floor, and back muscles. Discuss this program with your doctor and be sure to proceed at your own pace.

Lower Back

The following exercise strengthens the lower back so it can better withstand carrying the baby, picking up toys, etc. Both exercises are extremely important for new mothers.

- 1.** Lie on the stomach, hands at sides, relax completely into the floor. Inhale deeply.
- 2.** Make fists of both hands and press hard against the floor.
- 3.** Rest chin on floor. Slowly raise right leg, toes pointed, knee straight (about six inches from floor). Make sure left hipbone is pressed against floor.
- 4.** Hold three slow counts, slowly lower.
- 5.** Repeat with left leg.
- 6.** Repeat lifting both legs together.
- 7.** Relax. Breathe deeply, eight counts in, eight counts out.



Bicycle

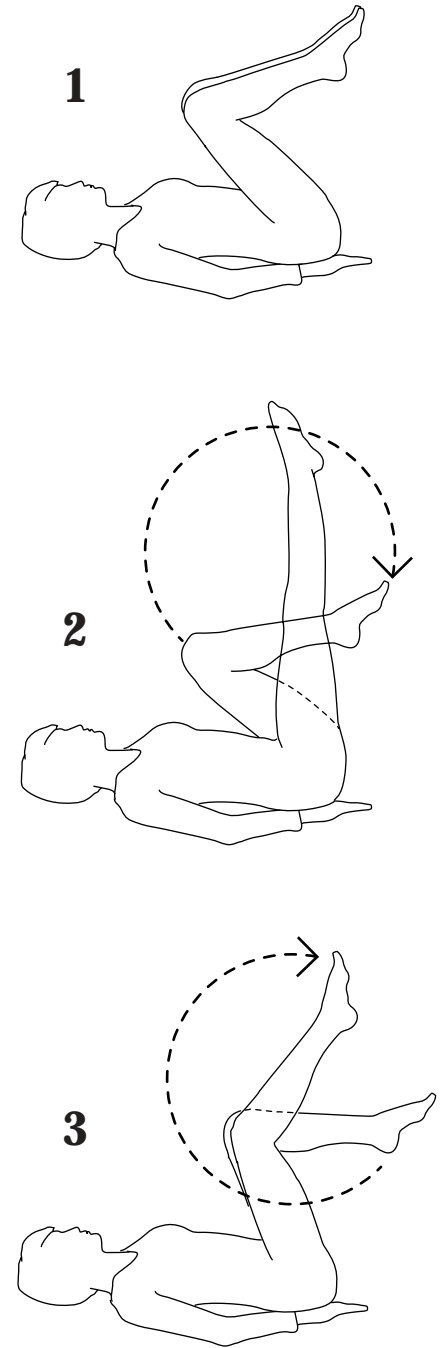
(thighs, stomach, waist)

Lie on your back, on the floor, palms under hips to protect the back. At a moderate speed rotate the legs as if you were riding a bicycle. Breathe deeply and evenly.

Do not work for speed and do not tire yourself.

Do this exercise in a relaxed manner. Remember to bring the knees all the way in towards the chest and stretch the legs out as long and straight as possible. Keep toes pointed. This insures a complete stretch.

The entire body is now warmed up and ready to begin the Special Exercises for the parts of the body that have undergone particular stress during pregnancy. Namely, the stomach, waist, thighs, lower back, breasts, pelvic and vaginal area.



Waist

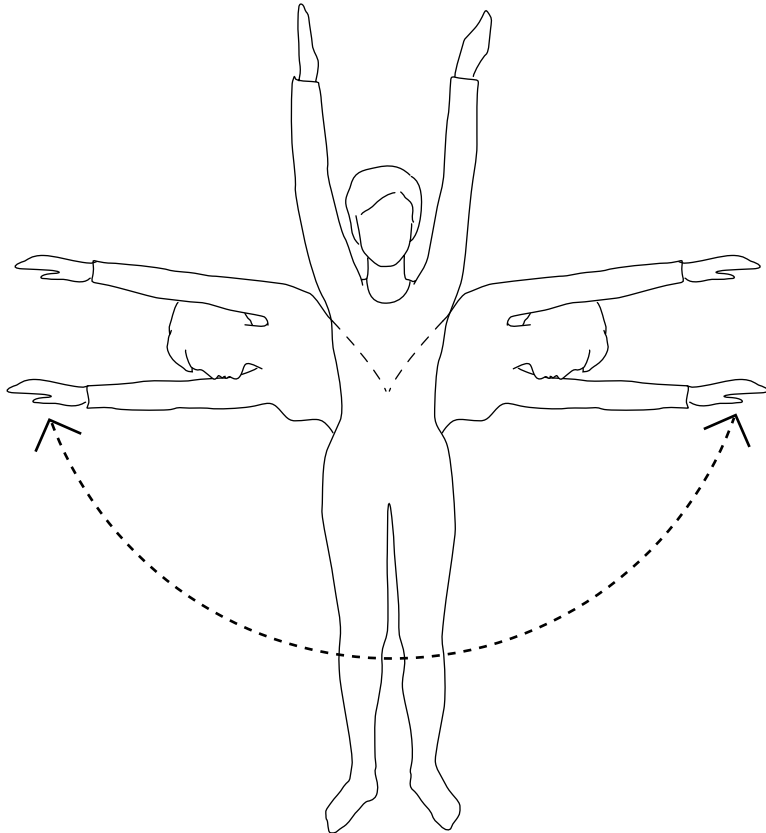
1. In a standing position, feet 12 inches apart, raise arms above head, close to the ears, palms facing. Stretch arms to fingertips. Take a deep full breath.

2. Bend and stretch upper torso (from the waist) as far as possible to the right side slowly and smoothly. Take eight counts, exhaling slowly.

3. Hold side position six counts. Then inhale.

4. Return slowly to vertical position, taking eight counts.

As you continue to practice you will be able to stretch further and further to the side. You should feel a strong pull from the hipbone to the armpit. Repeat twice on each side.



Outer Thigh

1. In a standing position, flex both knees very slightly, place hands on buttocks.

2. With one sudden sharp movement, contract the buttocks hard. (As if trying to squeeze buttocks together.)

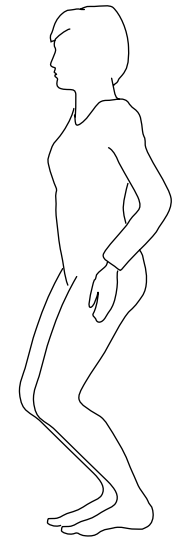
3. Hold four slow counts. Continue to tighten and grip harder.

4. Relax, straighten knees.

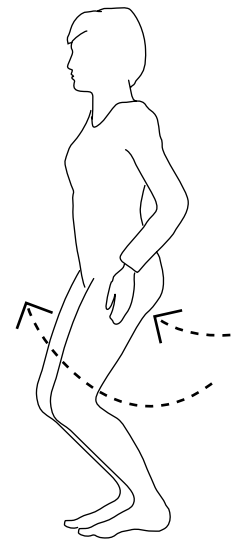
5. Repeat four times.

Watch yourself in the mirror, notice the fatty curve at the top of the outer thigh smooth, stretch and lengthen.

This exercise is extremely easy, effective and can be done while waiting for a bus, elevator, shopping, etc. Once you get the feel of the sharp hard contraction, you need not place the hands on the buttocks.



1

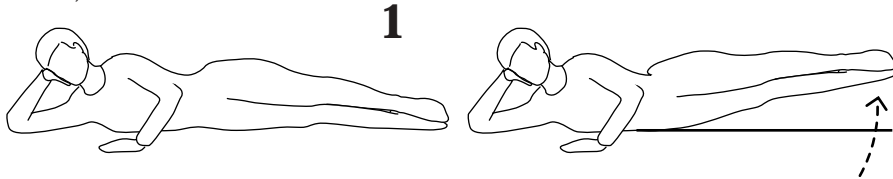


2

Outer and Inner Thigh

1. Remain lying on your left side. Rest the cheek in the palm of the left hand. Right hand pressed against floor.

2. Raise both legs at the same time, to the side.



3. Hold four counts. Toes pointed, legs straight, stretched, body in a straight line.

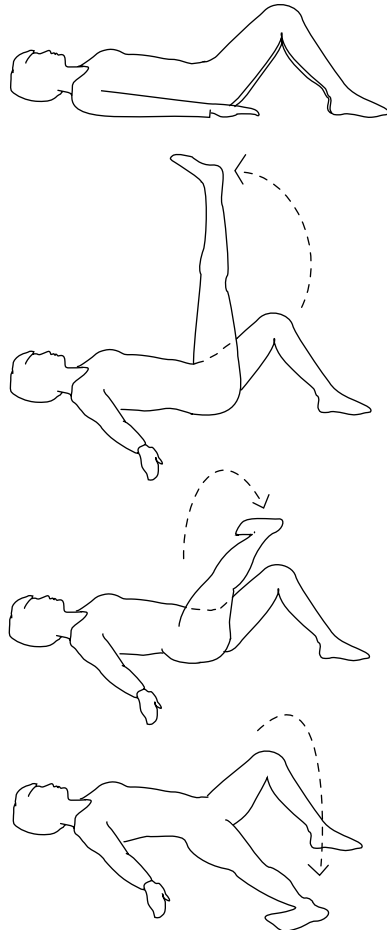
4. Repeat on right side.

Inner Thigh

1. Lie on back on floor, legs bent.

2. Raise right leg straight up, open it out to the side in a wide arc, with the heel squared (opposite of pointed) slowly lower till the outer foot touches floor.

3. Bring legs together. Repeat three times with each leg, alternating sides.

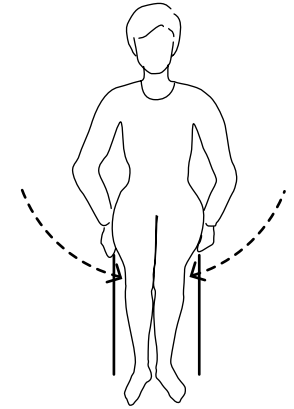


Inner Thigh and Vagina

1. Seated on a chair, press knees and inner thighs together hard. Contract the vaginal muscles as tightly as possible.

2. Hold six counts. Repeat three times.

This exercise will tone the inner thigh and tighten the vaginal passage.



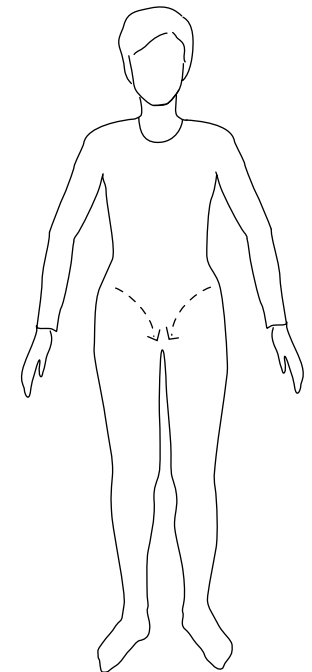
Pelvic Floor Area - Kegels

Incontinence (the ability to control urination) is often a side-effect of childbirth, and Kegel exercises help women regain control by strengthening the pelvic floor area. If you have been doing your Kegels throughout pregnancy, you will regain strength faster.

1. To do a "Kegel" squeeze together the muscles of your pelvic floor as if you are holding back urination.

2. Hold this for 10 - 30 seconds and do them at least 10 - 20 times per day.

This exercise is very effective and can be done while sitting, standing or walking.

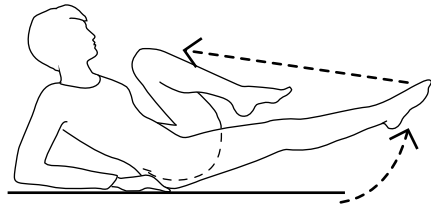


Stomach and Thighs

1. Lie flat on your back, on the floor.
2. Raise the upper-torso to a half sitting position so that the elbows rest on the floor and the palms are under the hips.
3. Slowly bring the right knee to the chest, at the same time lifting the left leg about three

inches off the floor. The straight leg is stretched taut, knees straight, toes pointed hard. Now reverse, stretch the right leg, draw the left knee to the chest.

Continue to alternate slowly. Do two sets of six, stopping to relax and breathe deeply in between sets. Inhale slowly for eight counts, exhale slowly eight counts.



Stomach and Thighs

The last stomach-thigh exercise is isometric. Be sure to support the back well.

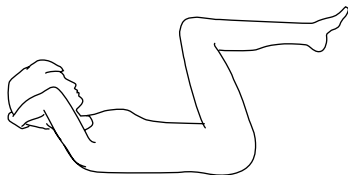
Remain on the floor, on your back, clasp the hands behind the base of the head and lift the torso about 12 inches from the floor.

At the same time, lift the legs about three inches from the floor. The body is now in a

curved arc with only the buttocks resting on the floor

Legs are straight, stretched, toes pointed.

Hold three slow counts. Relax, lie flat. Repeat once. Initially you may wish to keep your knees bent. Do not be alarmed if your stomach muscles tremble. This simply means they are weak and need strengthening.

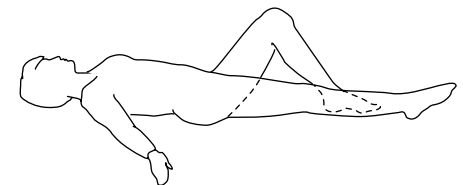
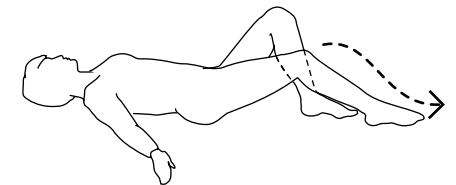
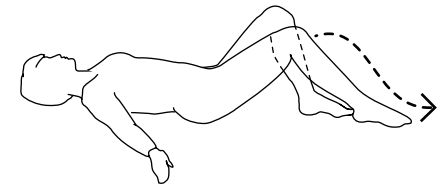
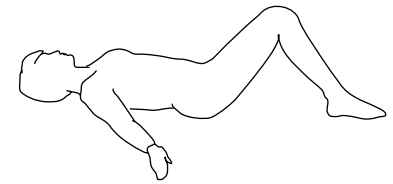


Lower Back

During and after pregnancy, great strain is placed on the lower back from the carrying of the additional weight of the baby.

To help eliminate backache, swayback and to improve posture and appearance, the following exercises are extremely helpful:

1. Lie on back, knees bent, feet flat on floor.
2. Keep left knee up. Slowly lower right leg to floor, inch by inch.
3. As you lower the leg press the lower spine into the floor so there is no airspace between your back and the floor. Check yourself by trying to slip your hand under your back. If there is enough space for your hand, you are not doing the exercise correctly. Make sure your spine is absolutely flat against the floor.



This is a marvelous exercise to reduce pain and tension at the end of the day.

Body Warm Up

Purpose – to increase circulation, breathing, and create a feeling of “aliveness” throughout the body.

Pendulum Swing

(waist, upper hip)

1. Stand with the legs placed wide apart. Bring the arms straight up over the head, close to the ears, palms facing.
2. Drop the arms and torso, from the waist, allowing the upper body to swing in a wide arc, side to side like a pendulum.

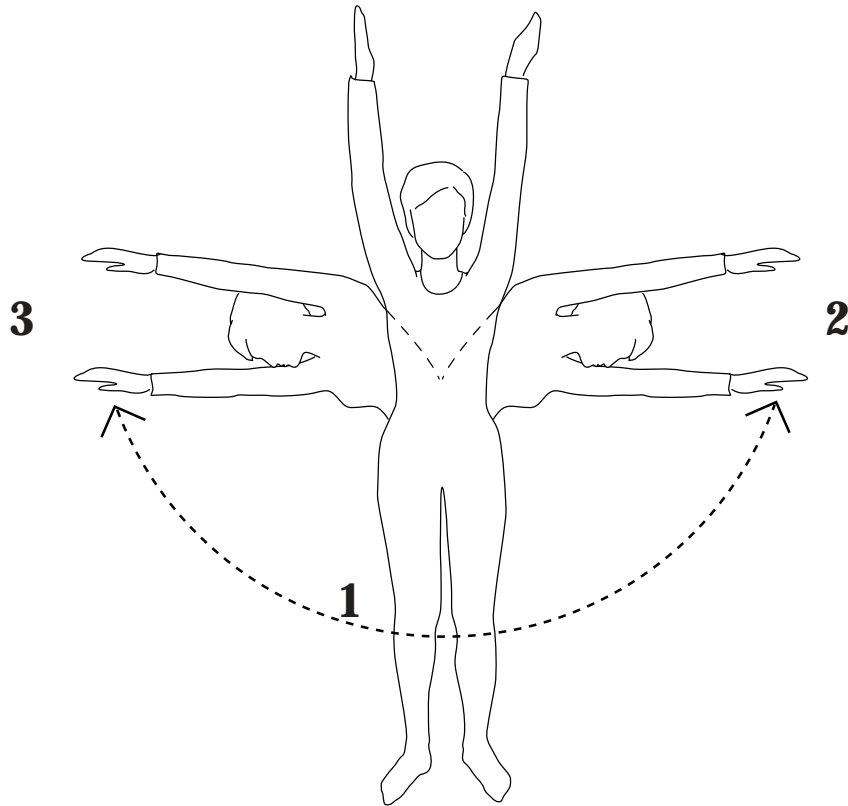
Feel the stretch at the waist and on the inner thigh. When the arms reach out to the sides, hold that position and really stretch. Swing stretch, swing stretch.

Repeat two series of eight swings.

Breathe out as you bend down.

Breathe in as you reach to the side.

Remember, breathing is particularly important to accelerate the circulation. This in turn causes an increased supply of oxygen in the blood which helps carry away fat from the tissue.

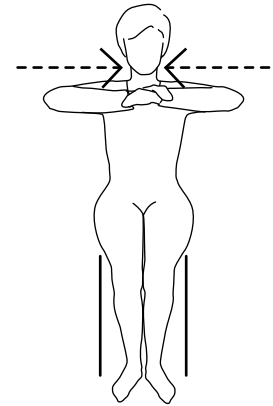


Bustline

Whether the bosom is large or small, muscle structure underneath can be toned and strengthened.

Do the following exercises with the body held straight and no arch in the spine.

1. Grasp both wrists with the opposite hand and push hard towards the elbows.
2. Hold three counts. Relax. Repeat four times.



1. Place both palms at temples, fingers pointing upwards.
2. Push palms against head while slowly raising elbows as high as possible. Repeat four times.

