



Are Your Postpartum Abs Ready for Exercise?

by [Amanda Palmer](#) | April 28, 2015



After the soreness of delivery fades and the routine of caring for a newborn settles in, most moms start thinking about how they're going to get back into shape. Getting a plan together and feeling motivated is wonderful, but be wary of taking on too much. Once you see your OB-GYN for your postpartum follow-up and he or she gives you the green light to begin your workouts again, take the first step. Until then, take it easy. Let your body rest and be kind to it. Waiting a few weeks will help the body shift things back into place. **If you jump the gun on your core workouts, you could be doing more harm than good.**



As the uterus grows and stretches, it pushes and manipulates your organs and it pulls on the muscles. When all is said and done, your body doesn't exactly retrace its steps.

“Many want to get right back into doing the workouts they were [doing] pre-pregnancy,” says Chris Cooper, NSCA personal trainer and Precision Nutrition coach. “The problem is that your body is not the same. Some muscles end up overstretched, some tight, some just inactive. I like to take a rehab approach and treat post-natal training as I would a client coming off surgery or injury.”

Even while you're recovering in the hospital, you can begin internal, deep muscle strengthening like kegels. This deep conditioning is part of a two-phase preliminary build-up developed by physical therapist and postpartum expert Marianne Ryan. Ryan authored new release “[Baby Bod](#)“, which focuses primarily on abdominal recovery and strengthening your core postpartum.

The first phase is muscle activation, which must include body alignment. This means the ribcage needs to be over the pelvis again. The second phase is learning how to breathe in coordination with muscle contractions. By working these deep inner muscles, you are creating a “balloon of support” for all of the big outer muscles.

>> Read more: [Strengthen Your Lady Parts During and After Pregnancy](#)

“By ignoring a proper program,” Cooper says, “it is possible to see complications like your abs bulging out, or getting a diastasis recti or prolapse, or you could end up with other muscles compensating for weaker muscles in your core that you didn’t properly train, like your back.”

TEST YOUR TUMMY

In order to figure out if you can begin doing ab work, try checking your abdominal wall for separation. Trace the line from the bottom of your sternum to your belly button. If you feel **a gap larger than two finger-widths**, contact your OB-GYN. You could be dealing with diastasis recti, which is a wide separation of your abdominal muscles due to the softening of the connective tissues during pregnancy.

If there’s little to no separation, you can gently begin a few core exercises. Master the preliminary phase first by teaching your body when to exhale and how to brace the deep core muscles. Begin small with **side planks, glute bridges, dead bugs** and modified movements. Avoid suspension training like traditional planks and pushups as well as sit-ups and crunches.

>> WATCH: [Intro to Core 3- Minute Workout](#)



ABS AFTER A C-SECTION

But what if you had a Cesarean? Postpartum ab work can be different because you're dealing with scar tissue. The scar tissue needs time to form and heal. Your doctor will tell you that any sort of "tugging" or pulling feeling on the scar tissue is cause for concern. [Click here for a C-section mom must-read.](#)

"A tummy tuck is not dissimilar from C-sections in the actual procedure of cutting the abdominal wall," explains Ben Bonaventura, NSCA-CPT, ACSM Level II and ART practitioner. "With C-sections, postural abdominal work should be used to help reactivate lower abdominal musculature."

Once the deep core muscles, the breathing and the separation are all under control, you can begin adding more motion into your workout. Before you go isolating the lower abs, address the core in its entirety. The core is the steering wheel for all movements, including walking. Bonaventura, who is also the GM of Retro Fitness at One New York Plaza in NYC, recommends performing step ups on a 4-inch box with good posture and control, increasing the height once the exercise becomes effortless. After the three or four months of gentle rehab, you can experiment with planks to address the lower abs.

>> Get your workout: [Stay Strong During Your Pregnancy with Amanda Strong](#)

Recovering from pregnancy and birth takes time. Pregnancy hormones will continue to trickle in for a few months. The first three to four months will be mostly occupied by caring for your newborn and gradually building up your strength. You need to spend time figuring out what exercises feel like in your new body and learning its signals for limitations. Working slowly the first few months will lay a solid foundation for more advanced workouts later.



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WHAT?

3 Comments



Alison Zaccone Jimenez

LOVE IT

April 28, 2015 at 11:22 am



rehana Yahya Marican

May 4, 2015 at 10:30 am

Hi can u do any cardio for beginner low impact that target lower body part especially thighs.... THNAK YOU



Marianne Ryan PT

May 27, 2015 at 3:37 pm

Delighted to see that more and more people are becoming aware that it takes time to recover from childbirth and not to jump into an exercise routine that is too challenging for your current condition. Thank you for mentioning my book *Baby Bod - Turn Flab to Fab in 12 Weeks Flat*.

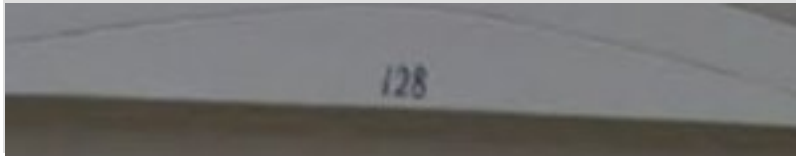
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