

Postpartum Activity: Avoid Too Much, Too Soon



You know the importance of prenatal care, but the postpartum period is just as critical in the health of you and your baby. Even after delivery, that bundle of joy can put strain on your body. Muscles may be weakened from the rigors of birth, and you may feel fatigued, leaving your body vulnerable to injury.

To avoid a postpartum problem, listen to your body and learn your limits. Then, follow these tips for easing back into your routine.

EXERCISE SAFETY

You can begin walking as soon as you feel comfortable moving around, but wait at least a few days after giving birth. Consider walking with a stroller, to make the activity a bond-

ing experience with your child. More rigorous activity, such as jogging or aerobics, should be avoided until your postpartum check up.

Breathing exercises, light pelvic lifts and ankle rotations can begin a few days after giving birth, but sit-ups and curls require a few weeks of recovery.

When you resume exercise, you may be tempted to focus on your abdominals, but don't forget other supportive muscles. A strong back, shoulders and pelvis are also needed to bring your body back into proper alignment and let you stand tall.

If you experience dizziness, fatigue or bright red bleeding at any time, stop exercising immediately and contact your health care provider before attempting future activity.

TENDING TO BABY

When holding your baby, use a support pillow and keep your back straight. Hunching over the child rounds your shoulders and can strain your back.

To pick up your baby, stand with your feet apart and bend at your knees. Then, lift up with your knees instead of your back.

Avoid resting the baby on your hip—the position makes your spine twist, which can cause back pain.

LITTLE LEAKS

Be aware that even after having your baby, you may experience mild incontinence. Pregnancy and delivery have weakened your pelvic muscles, so it may be harder to control your bladder, especially when doing activity. Lifting your baby, jogging and even sneezing can lead to minor leaks.

If the problem is persistent or interferes with your daily life, contact your health care provider. A physical therapist can demonstrate exercises to help you restore bladder control.

CATCH SOME ZZS

Make sure to get plenty of rest. Sleep gives your body a chance to heal and recharges your batteries so you can take on the next day. You may want to jump back into your daily routine, and your new arrival will demand most of your waking hours, but too much activity will catch up with you. If you feel overexerted, take a time-out. ■

Information for this handout has been adapted from:

- Sutter Health (<http://www.babies.sutterhealth.org>)
- BabyCenter (<http://www.babycenter.com>)

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