

# Pelvic Floor Exercises for After Childbirth

## Introduction

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Here are some examples of exercises for you to try. The exercises may be suggested for a condition or for rehabilitation. Start each exercise slowly. Ease off the exercises if you start to have pain.

You will be told when to start these exercises and which ones will work best for you.

## How to do the exercises

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### Belly breathing (diaphragmatic breathing)



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slide 1 of 7, Belly breathing (diaphragmatic breathing),

1. Lie on your back, or prop yourself up on several pillows.
2. Put one hand on your belly and the other on your chest.
3. Breathe in slowly through your nose. When you breathe in, push your belly out as far as possible. You should feel the hand on your belly move out, while the hand on your chest does not move.
4. Breathe out slowly through your mouth. When you breathe out, you should feel the hand on your belly move in.

Try to practice this breathing method 1 or 2 times a day for 3 to 5 minutes each time. When you can do this type of breathing well while lying down, learn to do it while sitting or standing.

### Pelvic tilt



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slide 2 of 7, Pelvic tilt,

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.
2. Tighten your belly muscles by pulling your belly button in toward your spine. Press your lower back to the floor. You should feel your hips and pelvis rock back.
3. Hold for about 6 seconds while breathing smoothly, and then relax.
4. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

**Cat-cow**



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slide 3 of 7, Cat-cow,

1. Get on your hands and knees. Your shoulders should be directly above your wrists, and your hips should be above your knees. Your back should be flat, and your neck should extend straight out from your spine. Your gaze should be toward the floor below.

2. Relax your head and allow it to droop. Round your back up toward the ceiling until you feel a nice stretch in your upper, middle, and lower back. Hold this stretch for as long as it feels comfortable, or about 15 to 30 seconds.
3. Then let your back curve down by pressing your stomach toward the floor. Lift your buttocks toward the ceiling. If it doesn't bother your neck, you can raise your head as you allow your back to sway. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds.
4. Go back and forth smoothly 2 to 4 times between the rounded back and swayed back positions.

If you have a neck problem or injury, keep your neck in the original position in line with your torso instead of moving it with your spine.

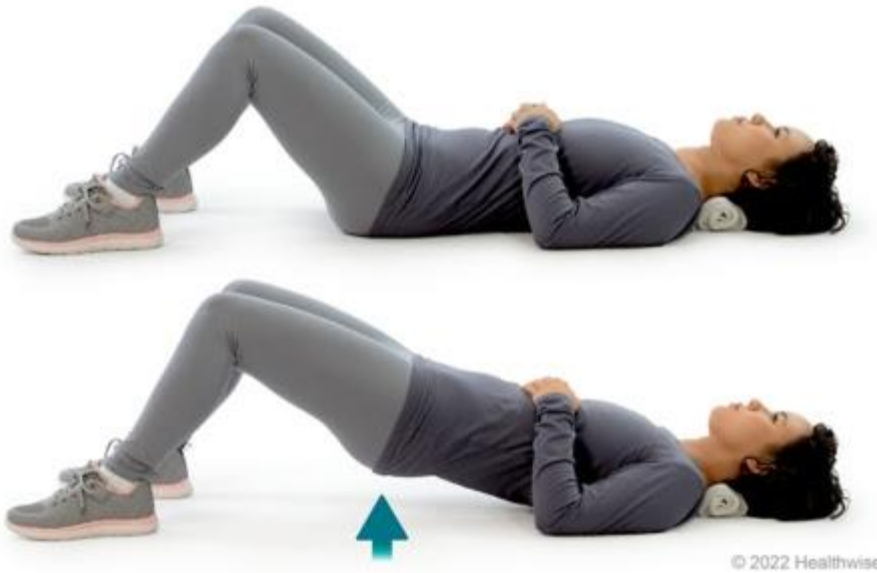
#### **Pelvic tilt with heel slide**



slide 4 of 7, Pelvic tilt with heel slide,

1. Lie on your back with your left knee straight. Your right knee should be bent.
2. Tighten your belly muscles by pulling your belly button in toward your spine. Press your lower back to the floor. You should feel your hips and pelvis rock back. Try to keep your belly muscles tight while you do the exercise.
3. Bend your left knee by sliding your heel across the floor and toward your buttock.
4. Slide your foot back to the starting position.
5. Repeat 8 to 12 times with each leg.

#### **Bridging (feet flat)**



slide 5 of 7, Bridging (feet flat),

1. Lie on your back with both knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Your knees should be bent about 90 degrees.
2. Tighten your belly muscles by pulling your belly button in toward your spine. Keep breathing normally and don't hold your breath.
3. Push your feet into the floor, squeeze your buttocks, and lift your hips off the floor until your shoulders, hips, and knees are all in a straight line. Keep your hips level.
4. Hold for about 6 seconds.
5. Slowly lower your hips back to the floor.
6. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

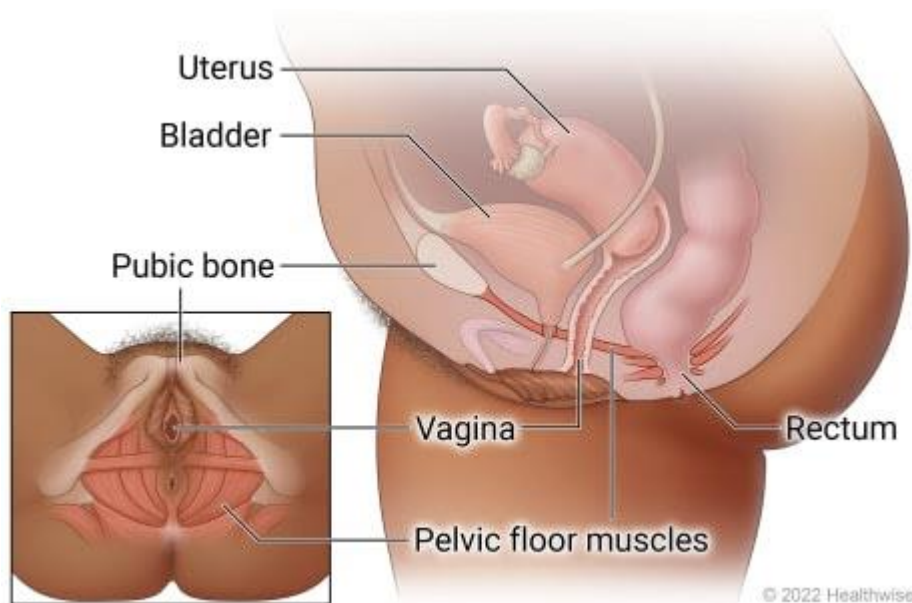
### Wall squat



slide 6 of 7, Wall squat,

1. Stand with your back against a wall. Place your feet about shoulder-width apart.
2. Move your feet out in front of you so they are about a foot in front of your hips. Tighten your belly muscles by pulling your belly button in toward your spine.
3. Slowly squat down as if you are going to sit in a chair, sliding your back down the wall as you squat.
4. Be sure that your knees do not go in front of your toes as you squat.
5. Hold for about 6 seconds.
6. Slowly rise to your standing position.
7. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

#### Pelvic floor (Kegel) exercise



slide 7 of 7, Pelvic floor (Kegel) exercise,

1. Squeeze your muscles as if you were trying not to pass gas. Or squeeze your muscles as if you were stopping the flow of urine. Your belly, legs, and buttocks shouldn't move.
2. Hold the squeeze for 3 seconds. Then relax for 5 to 10 seconds.
3. Start with 3 seconds, then add 1 second each week until you are able to squeeze for 10 seconds.
4. Repeat the exercise 10 times per session. Try to do 3 to 8 sessions a day.

Kegels work best when done on a regular schedule. Talk to your doctor if you don't notice improvement after doing Kegels for 3 or 4 months.

Don't make it a practice to do Kegels while urinating. Over time, doing this could hurt your bladder.

If doing these exercises causes pain, stop doing them and talk with your doctor.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

