

Gestational Diabetes and Postpartum Exercise

Exercising after having a baby

Women who experienced gestational diabetes are advised to remain healthy. While it is estimated that 9 out of 10 cases of gestational diabetes go away after giving birth, those who have experienced gestational diabetes are likely to develop this again in future pregnancies as well as have an increased risk of developing diabetes later in life. Luckily the key healthy lifestyle changes mothers made during pregnancy can help prevent or delay the development of type 2 diabetes in the future. Mothers with gestational diabetes are usually advised to follow a healthy diet and be regularly physically active after birth. When you're feeling tired, being active may seem like the last thing you need. But regular activity can relax you, keep you fit and help you feel more energetic.

It can also help your body recover after childbirth and may help prevent postnatal depression and development of type 2 diabetes.

When can I start exercising after birth?

If you had a straightforward birth, you can start gentle exercise as soon as you feel up to it. This could include walking, gentle stretches, [pelvic floor exercises](#) and [deep stomach exercises](#).

It's usually a good idea to wait until after [your six-week postnatal check](#) before you start any high-impact exercise, such as aerobics or running.

If you exercised regularly before giving birth and you feel fit and well, you may be able to start earlier. Talk to your midwife, health visitor or GP.

If you had a caesarean, your recovery time will be longer, so talk to your midwife, health visitor or GP before starting anything too strenuous.

What should I be aware of before exercising?

Your lower back and core abdominal muscles may be weaker than they used to be.

Your ligaments and joints are also more supple and pliable in the months after birth, so it's easier to injure yourself by stretching or twisting too much.

Don't rely on your pre-pregnancy sports bra. Your back and cup size are likely to have changed, so get measured for a new one.

How do I know if I'm overdoing exercise after having a baby?

If your [postnatal bleeding \(lochia\)](#) gets heavier or changes colour (becomes pink or red) after activity, you could be overdoing it. You're also likely to feel very tired.

Listen to your body. Pace yourself and make sure you get plenty of rest, too.

Exercise ideas for new mums

Play energetic games with older children. You can exercise by running/walking or crawling about with them.

Build activity into your day. Use the stairs instead of the lift or, for short journeys, walk instead of taking the car. Play with them in the park instead of just watching them.

Bend down to pick things up, rather than bend over. Picking things up off the floor is something you're likely to be doing a lot. If you bend down (bent knees and straight back) instead of bending over (straight knees and a bent spine), you'll strengthen your thigh muscles and avoid damaging your back. Hold heavy objects close to your body.

Borrow or buy an exercise DVD. This is a good way to work out at home. You could get a friend or your children to join in.

Do some postnatal exercises. They'll strengthen vital muscles and help get you in shape. See [Your post-pregnancy body](#) for ideas, or ask your midwife or health visitor.

You could try this [postnatal yoga video](#).

Other Resources

For more ideas try the active after childbirth page on the 'This Mum Moves' website <https://thismummoves.co.uk/mum-or-mum-to-be/#active-after-childbirth>

Join a postnatal exercise class.

Ask your health visitor if she knows of any in your area. If you're going to a class that isn't a special postnatal class, make sure you tell the instructor that you've recently had a baby.

More information about local classes is available on the following websites:

- Live Life Aberdeenshire - <https://www.livelifeberdeenshire.org.uk/sport-and-physical-activity/>
- Sport Aberdeen - <https://www.sportaberdeen.co.uk/>
- Moray Sports hub - <http://www.sportinmoray.co.uk/>
- ALISS - <https://www.aliss.org/>
- Scottish Services Directory on NHS Inform <https://www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory>