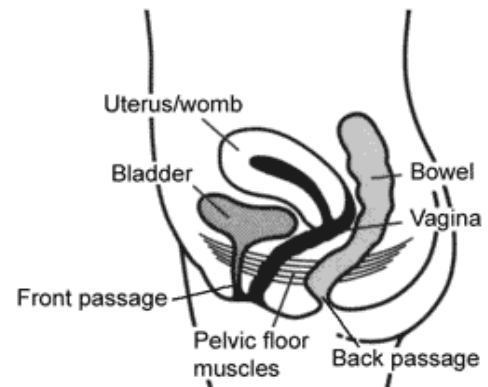




Women's Health Physiotherapy Advice Post Normal Vaginal Delivery

Pelvic Floor

During pregnancy your pelvic floor muscles have been weakened by hormones and extra pressure. In addition, a vaginal delivery can cause trauma to the area, therefore it is important to strengthen the muscles after the birth of your baby. This exercise helps to prevent any future bladder or bowel problems and prolapses. It is an exercise for life (and will improve your sex life).



Pelvic floor exercise:

- Imagine you are about to pass wind and tighten around your back passage.
- Still squeezing your back passage, tighten your front passage as if stopping passing water.
- Try to feel the squeeze and lift inside.
- Hold for 3 secs, then relax, do five of these and follow with five quick ones (nips). As this gets easier, try to gradually build up to 10 secs.
- Ensure you are not holding your breath or squeezing your buttock muscles.

Try to get into the habit of doing this exercise every time you do something for your baby so that you do it frequently through the day. You may occasionally try to “stop mid-stream” but **DO NOT DO IT MORE THAN ONCE A MONTH** (it can cause other bladder problems).

1 in 3 women suffer from
bladder weakness
(Continence foundation 2019)

50% of women develop a prolapse
(NICE guideline, 2019)

Apps to recommend: **NHS Squeezy** and '**Kegel Kat**' help you to remember to do your pelvic floor exercises regularly and can also help to record the exercises you've completed.

Watch our videos including pelvic floor function and exercise :

Search Barnsley Hospital – Maternity Service – Your Pregnancy

www.barnsleyhospital.nhs.uk/services/maternity-services/early-weeks-of-your-pregnancy



Abdominal Muscles

As you are sitting or standing pull your tummy button in towards your spine. Hold it for 5 – 10 seconds and then repeat 5 – 10 times. Try to get into the habit of doing this exercise every time you do something for your baby so that you do it frequently through the day. Do not hold your breath, only hold your tummy!

Tender Perineum

Following delivery it is normal to feel tender around your vagina. Here are a few things you can do to ease this:

- Wrap an ice pop/ice cubes in kitchen roll and place it in your underwear for up to 10 minutes. Make sure that you have wrapped it up fully to prevent any ice burns.
- Drink plenty of water to dilute your urine to help reduce discomfort (less sting) when passing urine.
- If passing urine is a problem, try to reduce the consumption of drinks containing Caffeine (you may already be doing this if you are breast feeding).
- Pass urine wherever is most comfortable for you even if that is in the bath or shower.
- You may find it more comfortable to support your pelvic floor when going to the toilet. Support from behind when passing urine and support from the front when opening your bowels.

Advice for home

- Try not to overdo things – your body heals best when you are resting.
- Be mindful of your posture and always make sure that you are sitting supported particularly when feeding your baby.
- Avoid stooping for any length of time. Try to stand tall, be mindful of the position of your back and engage your stomach muscles.
- Be careful how you pick up heavy objects. Try to lift from your knees rather than your back.





- Repeat the exercises regularly and build up activity/walking gradually.
- If you enjoy swimming wait until you have had your 6 week GP check-up, your blood loss has ceased and if you have had stitches - your wound needs to have healed.
- Be careful with high impact exercises for 3 months if you are bottle feeding or for 3 months after you have finished breast feeding. This is because your ligaments take a few months to recover from the effects of pregnancy hormones.

If you have any further questions please don't hesitate to contact the Women's Health Physiotherapy Team on 01226 432375 or 01226 431281.