

Pelvic Health Physiotherapy in Postnatal Care – Advice following Caesarean Section



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Caesarean section (C-Section)

- The following slides go through scar massage and gentle abdominal exercises that you can do to start you on your journey postnatally
- Please also look at the presentation on the pelvic floor muscles as these are important to do even if you have not had a vaginal delivery

C-Section

- It takes approximately 6 weeks for a C-section scar to heal. Your scar area may feel itchy, numb and sore for a few weeks afterwards and it may look pinky/red and raised
- As your scar heals, it can feel tight and the layers of skin and deeper soft tissue can become 'stuck' together which may feel uncomfortable. Scar massage can be used to reduce these 'adhesions' and ease sensitivity, giving your scar more elasticity and movement
- Your scar should not be painful and should not prevent you from carrying out daily activities once it is fully healed. Keep an eye out for signs of infection; redness, heat and swelling around the incision site, an increase in pain in the wound site, pus in the wound, developing a temperature or feeling generally unwell. Seek advice from your midwife, health visitor or doctor if you are concerned
- You should wait until your scar is fully healed over before beginning massage. There should be no open areas or scab visible. If you are unsure, check with an appropriate medical professional first



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C-Section Scar Massage

- Try using a warm compress or having a bath beforehand
 - Position yourself comfortably in lying or half-sitting with pillows for support
 - Use a suitable, non-perfumed lubrication product or oil*
 - Try and aim for 10 minutes of massage daily
 - It should not be painful, but you may feel a little discomfort
- Build up gradually over the days and weeks, one step at a time



*Recommended oils for lubrication could include olive oil, sunflower oil, or almond oil (as long as you don't have a nut allergy)

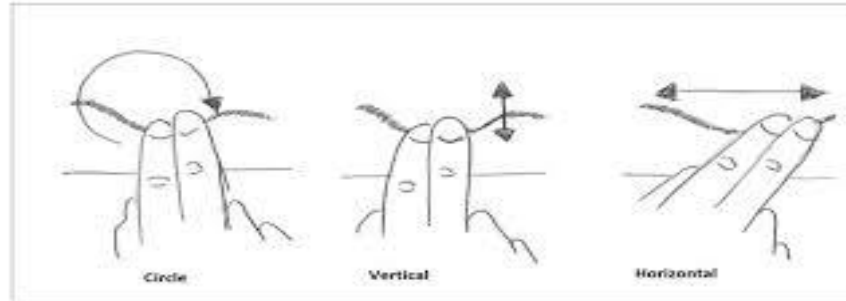


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C-Section Scar Massage Technique

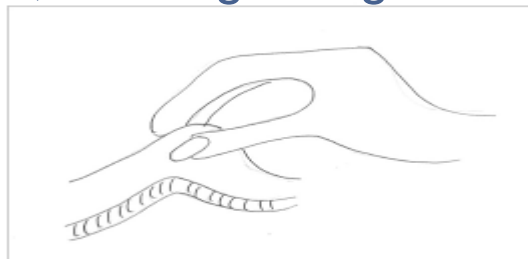
1. Start by massaging the areas of skin surrounding the scar, working towards the scar as it becomes less sensitive
2. Place your fingers gently on the scar and massage along it, across it and in small circles over it. Focus more attention on areas where it feels tighter
3. As this becomes easier, apply more pressure and work deeper into the soft-tissue and surrounding area of the abdominal muscles, continuing with the vertical, horizontal and circular movements



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For further tips on C-section scar massage follow this [link](#)

4. When you are happy with the first few steps, you can try rolling the scar between your thumb and forefinger, working along the scar line



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The Effects of Pregnancy on the Abdomen

- If your baby was born by Caesarean section, your abdomen may feel sore and weak where the incision was made
- If you had a vaginal delivery, your abdominal muscles will still be weaker than before you had your baby. This is because the muscles will have lengthened and stretched to accommodate your growing baby
- The abdominal muscles form an important part of your 'core', so it is important to try and rebuild their strength postnatally in order to minimize low back pain

Abdominal Exercises and why do them?



- Your deep tummy muscles help to support your spine
- They also work with your pelvic floor muscles to help support your pelvic organs
- Weak abdominal muscles postnatally can cause low back pain
- Abdominal exercises can help to reduce any separation of the tummy muscles (known as Diastasis Recti or DRAM)



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How to find your Deep Abdominal Muscles

- ☐ Lie on your back with your head on a pillow and with your knees bent, or sit upright in a chair
- ☐ Place your fingertips on the inside of your hip bones and apply a little pressure
- ☐ Breathe in and feel your tummy rise under your hands
- ☐ As you breathe out gently draw your lower tummy in away from your hands, as though squeezing your lower tummy in, away from a tight belt
- ☐ You should feel the deep abdominal muscles tighten and draw in under your hands
- ☐ Aim to hold the contraction for 2 or 3 breaths then relax

If you have had a Caesarean section wait until any drains have been removed and start very gently, when you feel ready. Stop if you experience any discomfort



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How to do Abdominal Exercises

- ☐ You can lie on your back, your side, sit upright in a chair or be on all fours
- ☐ Engage your deep abdominal muscles and carry on breathing normally
- ☐ Start with holding for a couple of breaths and gradually build up
- ☐ Repeat about 5 times in a row and gradually build up to about 10
- ☐ Aim to do them twice daily

How to Use Your Abdominal Muscles



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- ☐ Your abdominal muscles work with your pelvic floor muscles to help to support your spine
- ☐ When you lift your baby, or anything heavy, draw in your pelvic floor and deep abdominal muscles
- ☐ It's also a good idea to keep the object you're lifting close to you, and to use your leg muscles
- ☐ If you've had a Caesarean section, avoid lifting anything heavier than your baby for at least 6 weeks. If you have a toddler, encourage them to climb up to you when you are sitting down rather than bending to pick them up



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