

MUMHOOD

Top tips for getting back into exercise post-birth

As you enter this new exciting stage of your life, keeping fit and healthy is more important than ever, and Mumhood is here to keep you confident, strong and full of energy along your journey.



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It is so common for new mums to not really appreciate how much our bodies have been through during pregnancy and birth, and therefore how important it is to spend time repairing our bodies and putting ourselves back together. If we want to have a pain-free, active life in the future, not to mention potentially navigating another pregnancy, then this post-natal rehab phase is key to getting us back on track.

Here are our top 8 tips to feeling energised, strong, confident and free from pain as a new mum.

1. DEMAND MORE FROM YOUR 6-WEEK CHECK

It is so important that you leave your 6-week check understanding how your body is recovering from your pregnancy and birth. Ask your GP to check for your ab separation so that you know what you're working with, and ask them to check any stitches etc. If anything isn't recovering quite as it should be, you need to understand how you can help with this, but also this will affect what type of exercises you can start to do.

2. BOOK TO SEE A WOMEN'S HEALTH PHYSIO IF YOU ARE AT ALL UNSURE ABOUT YOUR RECOVERY AND AB SEPARATION

To put things into perspective, every woman in France gets 10 free Physio sessions post-birth to help with her rehab. We don't receive this option as standard on the NHS (although if you push as your 6-week check, you may be able to get some physio on the NHS). If this isn't offered to you, but you have significant ab separation or you want to ensure that your recovery means the chance of issues such as incontinence are less likely in the future, we would suggest visiting a Women's Health Physio who can help you understand the current state of your body and help you with your rehab.

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3. LITTLE AND OFTEN IS THE BEST WAY TO START YOUR POSTNATAL EXERCISE JOURNEY

Don't put yourself under any pressure to lose your baby weight quickly, especially if you are breastfeeding. You will see significantly better results long-term from creating excellent foundations, with a strong pelvic floor and deep core connection. The key to these exercises is 'little and often' so think about doing 10-15 minutes a day, at least 4 times a week. This will be much more beneficial than a 60 minute blow out once a week.

4. MAKE SURE YOU'RE NOT DOING EXERCISES THAT WILL AGGRAVATE ANY AB SEPARATION.

Any exercise that causes 'doming' (where you see a ridge down the centre of your tummy if you come into a crunch position) should be avoided. If you can see this happening, you need to take modifications on the exercise. As a rule of thumb, no exercises that work your '6-pack muscles' e.g. crunches, should be performed if you still have any ab separation. These exercises will cause the muscles to stretch further apart and make it much harder to get rid of your 'baby pouch' in the long term. We have lots of information on this on our instagram [@mum_hood](https://www.instagram.com/mum_hood).

5. START YOUR PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES STRAIGHT AFTER BIRTH AND NEVER STOP!

There's no reason why you can't start your pelvic floor exercises straight after birth. You should really aim to do these daily, so pop some post-it notes around your house, so every time you see them, you are reminded to do them. If you are finding it hard to know if you're doing these exercises correctly, you can invest in a device such as Elvie, which links to an app on your phone to tell you if you're doing them right.

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6. FIND A CLASS NEAR YOU SO YOU CAN SOCIALISE WITH OTHER NEW MUMS

We have loads of Mumhood classes on the timetable at Frame (4 locations around London) where you can get a sweat on, meet like-minded mums and know that you're working out in the presence of an expert who can ensure you're performing exercises correctly. It's so much more fun (and more affordable) to join a class rather than pay for a PT. Our classes are designed so that you can bring your baby with you, so no added childcare costs. If you're not based in London, check online as there is likely to be a postnatal class nearby.

7. KEEP EXERCISE LOW IMPACT FOR THE FIRST 6 MONTHS

Whilst you're still in your rehab process, it's a good idea to keep your exercise low impact. This doesn't need to mean low intensity, you can still get a sweat on and get your heart-rate pumping, it's more about reducing pressure on the pelvic floor before you've found your connection post-birth. You can still attend HIIT-style classes, but take the low-impact option, which any good instructor will be able to provide. Another reason to keep exercise low-impact is because the hormone Relaxin is still present in the body for six months post-birth, or until you finish breast-feeding.

8. INVEST IN A RUNNING BUGGY (Post 6 months)

Once you're back to feeling like your old self and the pelvic floor is feeling strong, invest in a running buggy. It's such a great way of multitasking and fitting in exercise when you don't have childcare to hand. A run round the park whilst baby sleeps is one of the best ways to start the day and once you've invested, it's FREE!

