



The
Active Mama
Restore Guide

BY DOMINIQUE MILLER

MAGIC
MAMA





LET'S RESTORE
YOUR BODY
AND ENERGY,
MAMA



WITH DOMINIQUE MILLER



HI! I'M DOMINIQUE

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WELCOME MAGIC MAMA

Congratulations on the most incredible thing the human body can do - birth.
No matter what your birth was like, whether it was what you imagined or not,
whether you were left feeling joyous or traumatised, or a mix of both,
YOU are amazing. You are a Magic Mama.

Now you need to carve out time for yourself more than ever.

You will have demands on you like never before.

And we can do this together. x

THIS BOOK IS FOR YOU IF:

You are pregnant

Pregnant mothers are bombarded with what baby will need, but not many resources for our own wellbeing. This is for you to be prepared and optimise your postpartum recovery from day 1 and in fact you can start your pelvic floor exercises now.

You had a natural birth

Our bodies are capable of powerful things. A natural birth does not mean it was not hard, nor that it was hard. Birthing & pregnancy is unique to each woman and our bodies need to recover.

You had a c-section

C-section births are a way to birth your baby into the world through your tummy, whether you opted for this style of birth or you ended up there after a tough labour. You and your body need support.

You had a medicalised birth

Many mothers experience a medicalised birth that in some way, some intervention they felt that they were out of control. You are a magic mama. Your birth was powerful and you need to heal and recover your strength.

You have a toddler or older kids

I know some women miss this information even after the infant months. This guide will share pelvic floor safe exercise & give you tips on recovery that you may still need.

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INTRODUCTION

YOUR MAMA CARE GUIDE

The one thing for sure is that parenting infants and young children
is a pleasure & a provocation.

It is a call to us to grow into mothers.

It is also a call to us to care & value ourselves more than ever as women.



THE VEIL LIFTS

Sure, come on over to meet the baby!

After the birth, the veil has lifted. You are a magic mama. You birthed and you see the world differently, as you look at each woman who has children in admiration and awe.

This time is a special but also fragile time. Post natal depression and anxiety for new mothers is very prevalent. The reality of a crying baby and working out their cues can be perplexing.

To gain perspective - you have quite possibly endured like an ultra-marathoner, you may have been 'beaten up' (albeit between your legs) like an MMA wrestler, you now are a milk factory for a new human and your body has deflated like a balloon, with your core muscles on holiday.

Take a deep breath. Your hormones are not helping, but things will settle down.

Do you have a team of carers/physios/trainers looking after you? Do you have people cooking you meals for the next few months? Do you have family taking baby for you to physically have a break from holding them? If you answered yes to any of these - you are doing better than many.

We know that we will have visitors after the birth which is fabulous, but also, we must take care that new mamas have the rest they need and the help they need. So. Much. Help.

So, as you grow into mamahood, I want you to look back on the early weeks and months and feel ok. I want you to feel like you had a transition that supported you and that birthed you into a woman who can care for herself, and can reach out to get the care she needs as a mama.

And remember - You're allowed to just take it slow magic mama.

This slow going will pass soon enough & then listen to your body as your strength returns.



S E C T I O N

MAMA
WELLBEING

C H A P T E R

01

CARING FOR MAMA AS A PRIORITY

Let's get clear from the outset - when mamas go to do the shopping or watch their babes explore the playmat or the park, that's NOT downtime.

More than ever you need to schedule and get support for your self-care, or shall we say, sanity-preservation strategies!

Emotional leadership is super important as a parent.

And you will need a toolkit of wellness habits that work.

Rest, Exercise. Fresh Air. Support. Friends.

HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF FIRST

It's an initiation like no other.

When our baby is young the demands come thick and fast. This is undoubtedly a time that is emotionally as hard as becoming a teenager, but then you are doing it sleep-deprived with your hormones running wild, raising a baby in a society that doesn't seem to have the village we need to help us. Research in the UK showed 90% of new mums felt lonely.



I can't tackle every issue you will face in motherhood. Your sense of identity will shift, your concerns for money will likely increase and you will have a new relationship to the phrases like - 'juggle', 'time off' 'pelvic floor' 'dressing an octopus' & 'not tonight darling'.

But what I am trained to help you with is giving you a body/mind care guide that can support you as you heal and restrengthen.

Your physical & emotional needs will be front and centre for a while. And whilst we know that physical wellbeing is tied to mental wellbeing, so is the system and environment. So self-care as a mama needs not just safe physical restoration but consider how you can ask for support & also environments to boost your mood.

You will need a lot of rest & mothers also need a lot of help.

Have a recovery mindset.

Communicate with those around you about what you need.

Seek help when it's hard.

YOU ARE NOT BROKEN

The system around you has not been designed with women's wellbeing in mind. It was designed by men, for men. And frankly it's still a bit broken.

If you feel like you are struggling post-birth, post return to work, post 'family'... and mamahood feels hard - **you are not alone, and you are not broken.** Too many women feel that **they** are what is wrong.

But it is the system that is stacked against us. We are still birthing in patriarchal times.

The lack of support and honouring for birthing women is still substantial, even with modern 'progress'. We may have moved the needle by decreasing maternal deaths for example, but leaving 20-48% of women with birth trauma, as birth educator Rhea Dhempsey points out, is one way we know it has not moved the needle on women's wellbeing far enough.

We also see the patriarchal impact in - outdated paternity leave options, in underwhelming options for continuity of care in midwifery, lack of education on the clitoris, the scarce support for menopausal women, as well as in the fixation on young females and under-representation of women over 40 in entertainment. I know it's hard to swallow.

And did you know 15% of full-time working Mamas, compared to 76% of full-time working Dads, have full-time child-rearing support? Annabel Crabbe writes a whole book on this premise of 'The Wife Drought' for women and it is rather eye-opening.

So this book will focus on what you can do as an individual. It is a positive approach to focus on what you can achieve. But it can be useful to recognise where we have been impacted by systems and biases. Cos mothering is not done in a vacuum (or necessarily with a vacuum, though culture is still catching up).

In the Biopsychosocial model of health - as you see on the next page- there are 3 areas where we can improve our wellbeing.

Physical avenues of wellbeing include physical rehabilitation of any birth injury and the rebuilding of functional deep posture helps our wellbeing. Later exercise plays a great role in boosting inner mental health resources through this biological pathway releasing endorphins and dopamine. Good sleep helps (that will be absent for a bit), but also good food and hydration for healing potential. The good news is that you probably have plenty of oxytocin that comes from loving touch with your loved ones., if not, remember to ask for a hug. :)

Psychological avenues of wellbeing include the attention we place in our minds, the self-talk we engage in and the mental health routines we have. A positive strategy as a new mama is to focus on our small wins because it is noted that the brain is sticky for negative thoughts & dealing with the stresses of being inexperienced in the new job of mamahood can make our minds tend to focus on what we probably are getting wrong or what is not going well for us. Other ways we can help ourselves is to practice gratitude & self-compassion, find mindful moments and increase positive emotions.

The social/systemic/environmental avenues of wellbeing could be through engaging with support networks for mamas, parenting education, postnatal pilates or exercise groups and organizing shared care of your babe with partners, extended family, community and childcare providers. Making sure you are connecting to friends, family, nature and community is also a key to motherhood wellbeing. And once you are out of the 'baby bubble', however long that is for you, it is positive to stay engaged with your workplace or explore ways to stay connected to your career.

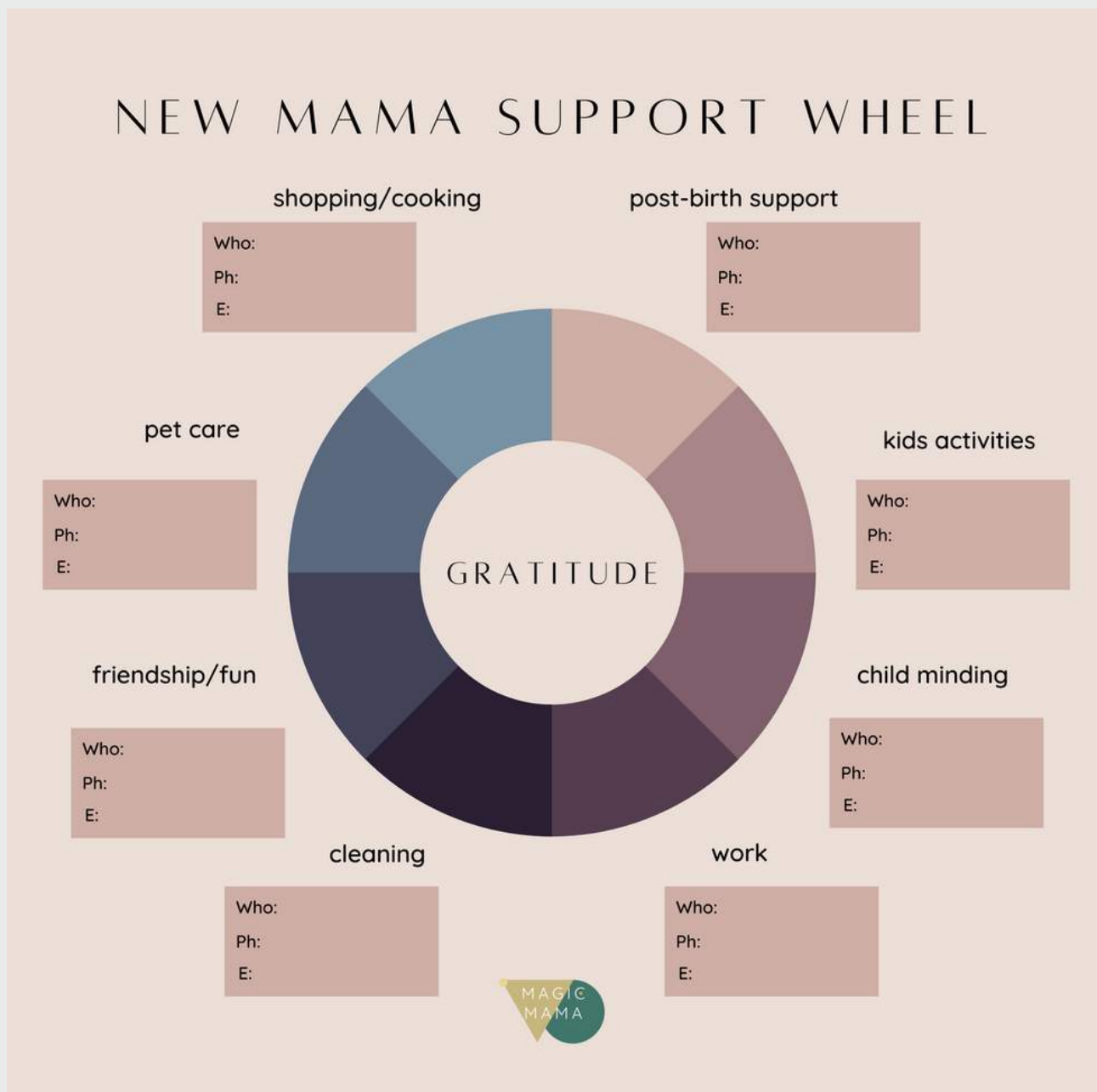


If you feel broken or disempowered it could be that you are feeling the effects of the social/systemic issues that face mothers.

What areas can you see that affect you and which other areas have you got the power to affect? Focus on the latter.

COMMUNITY CARE

Your mamahood network of support might appear organically, or you may need to extend yourself and start asking for the support you need (particularly if you are usually a strongly independent woman). It's time to flex your 'request muscle'.





TIME FOR YOU

Bathroom rituals & getting out the house

One thing that we can overlook is that our haven and peaceful home becomes a noisy place when you have kids. Taking time to do yoga with the door closed may end up with hearing your babe cry or your crawler banging on the door til you answer. So scheduling time for healthy routines both in and outside the home is important.

Each day and week you need to build in habits that support you to be both with your kids and by yourself.

Micro habits for wellbeing are my favorite for daily sanity bursts for mamas with babes. You can always add on a short stretch, meditation or reading to your shower routine before you head back out to the family.



What daily habits do you already have that you can add on to?

What weekly habits can you map in that get you out of the house ?

Who can take babe for a walk to give you some quiet time?

Exercise, nature, sleep and good nutrition all play a part in healthy habits. But if you feel like you have no time for these, whilst your sleep is interrupted with lil babe, reach out for help.

Add into your day a way to:

- go outside
- stretch or move with baby
- get time off being a carer
- talk to a friend
- take something off your list
- drink water
- do something you love
- eat more fruit & veg
- replace your coffee for tea





HABIT FORMATION

Stop 'martyr syndrome' in it's tracks

Habits are behaviours that are triggered and driven by subconscious patterns.

When we become mothers we begin to embed new habits that mesh with our child's. In some ways our minds are set up that way so we mother well - eg responding to feeding or sleepy cues. Building these response habits create safety and security. Habits may also help us - linking to our child's sleep cycles to get the extra rest after night feeding.

As a mother your habits map into your babies, any of your other kids and also start to revolve around your partners work and parenting habits.

Women's habits and the lifestyle those habits add up to after having kids can change entirely or not too much. It is an area we need to keep a check on as our brains map to empathize with our kids. Our hormonal profile shifts and the early days (weeks or years) of sleeplessness can in fact knock our confidence and unfortunately set us up for a future of 'martyr syndrome' as our minds re-wire to put others needs before our own. (Blah... like I said, something to watch out for)

The designer of the well-known personality profiling tool, the Enneagram, tells how mothers commonly mis-identify with the "Helper" profile because of the patterns set up in early motherhood. It is good for us to recognize this and create time for ourselves to explore our interests. How can you bring to life your Enthusiast or Achiever outside of motherhood.? What gender stereotypes can you bust to stay active?

Each day and week you need to actively build in habits that support you. Make time to discuss the times that work for you and your family. Give yourself space to reconnect to yourself, your passions or work and ultimately your wellbeing will boost.



WELLBEING BOOSTS

Take some of these tips to help you manage the motherlode. Mothers are shown to have increased purpose in their lives, but fall short in other areas of wellbeing - like pleasure and health. So make a boundary with yourself and others to enable you to put your wellbeing as a priority.



TRY THIS

7 DAY WELLBEING BOOST

1 - RESTORATIVE TIME

Take time to rest. Your cortisol is high and needs to re-balance. You deserve some tune-in time - to feel all the feels and connect to your heart & breathe.

2 - LOVE YOUR PELVIC FLOOR

Avoiding your pelvic floor will not help it heal or be the best. Reconnect to your pelvic exercises to feel better and minimise incontinence and prolapse.

3 - KNOW YOUR CORE

Our tummy muscles all work together with our breath. Remember to exhale purposefully whilst you recruit your pelvic floor & abdominals.

4 - MORE SUPPORT

Women generally are under resourced in this challenging time of recovery. Research an area of support you need. And flex your request muscle.

5 - STRONG AND SANE

Parenting is physically demanding and by exercising safely we help boost our physical energy & positive hormones to cope better. Take time to move.

6 - SELF-KINDNESS, KALE, WALK AND WINS

Today look after your mental well-being. Simple things like eating healthy, going for a walk, reflecting on the positive moments and being kind to yourself as you learn to manage these demands, can improve your mood.

7 - CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Parenting can be isolating in modern life. We need connection to others to boost oxytocin and feel good hormones. Reach out for a chat. Connect with other parents & kids, but also stay connected to work community, friends and other groups you enjoy.



TODAYS WELLBEING BOOST IS...

**I know that planning for self-care is hard as a Mama.
So we gotta be smart.**

Learning to use habits to build in routines that support our well-being is important. So too is using goal-setting research to improve the odds we will fulfill on our commitments to ourselves. Try noting your wellbeing boost plan for today and add how you will deal with obstacles. Implementation plans are shown to improve outcomes.

My boost plan:

How I will deal with obstacles:

When...

Then...

CHAPTER

02

SHARED CARE

Parenting. Welcome to sharing the care of your child. Whether you breast feed or bottle feed. Whether you attachment parent or cry them to sleep. Whether you are primary carer or not.

You will be starting to make decisions as parents and need to come to terms with compromises and complexities. Because parenting isn't 'easy' for anyone.

If you both look out for each other, and keep the channels of communication open, then it will be more likely you will both get some of the support you each need.

Note - I write for gendered parenting, but you may identify with either role particularly if you are same sex couple.

SHARED CARE - PARENTING

Blessed Parenting, Paternity Leave, Parenthood.

Parenting. It is surrounded by cultural implications and biological impulses. But just as in human evolution, culture and what is called 'nurture', is a whole lot bigger than we have given it credit for in human parenting roles.

We have of course historically given women the reigns of mothering and doing most of the parenting roles not just as babies, but for the decades they live at home.

Mothering is special. But it does not have to have the monopoly on parenting. Including your partner, giving them the reigns to learn to parent too, can improve your wellbeing & the children's too.



Yes, we have a pivotal role in the care, connection and raising of these little humans. We may even feel the complete biological urge to care for this lil being like nothing we've felt before (or for some women they don't - just like some men).

The thing to remember is you are not alone in this. Your partner became a parent when you became a parent. And it's our job together **as parents** to negotiate time with baby and time without.

One of the key things you will need to not only recover your body, but also your career & your well-being, is time for yourself and this will need the support of those around you. I recommend you share this booklet, or parts of it, with your partner/husband so they can understand the power and importance of their help.



THE IMPORTANCE OF FATHERING

The importance of fathering is culturally coming to the fore. We know that historically men had an unfair extend on their power in society & financially. This meshed well culturally with giving women the "power" in the homefront-with its fair share of thankless work and leaving women to "care".

What does this mean for parenting and fathering now? Well, men are coming to understand their power as carers, which evidence shows they can sharpen with experience. Even neuroscience research is now showing men can develop a 'maternal' brain. Men are also coming to terms with being equal in the house-keeping and realising how this has been unfair to women, especially new mamas when they're healing and the challenge when mothers return to work.

There is great research about how more equitable Parental Leave, paying fathers leave to care in the infant months too, makes men feel more connected to their children in many years to come and also increases relationship satisfaction, as there is a shared understanding the roles.

Fathers have a critical role to play in being one of the key attachments in their child's life.

One of the biggest challenges you will face in parenthood is the lack of time and the valuing of eachothers roles. The navigating of money & time are the gnarly and sometimes difficult parts of being partners in parenting. Remember its not healthy for any parent to be isolated in the journey and both mothers and fathers need support to be their best.

Men can play a key role in supporting mothers post-birth. Negotiating for the support you BOTH need is important with women commonly returning to their careers. You are not DINKS anymore & there's lots to negotiatie.



MAKING REQUESTS

Most common negotiations in "married with kids"...

- Time off/out of the home - whether for work or play
- Sex/intimate time
- Power - whose job or time will be more important when push comes to shove?
- Money - how much and whose job?
- Who is spending time caring for kids (not just sitting them in front of Netflix)
- Who is spending time shopping/cooking/cleaning/doing the kinder/school run
- Who is changing the nappy/doing the night settle/getting up with the kids

And yep, there are great books that liken marriage after babies with terrorist negotiaton - becuase well it's not always easy to negotiate when you both have strong competing needs with limited resources & you're sleep deprived! But it's imperative you honour your boundaries and value yourself. Even when it's not easy. (Sidenote regarding sex: up to 37% of women still report painful sex 6 months after birth. Pleasure needs boundaries too).

Boundaries are critical for the new mum.

Boundaries with self and Boundaries with others.

Boundaries say - I will get off my phone because I want to connect with my baby/kids

Boundaries say - I need you to look after baby because we are both parents/both working

Boundaries say - I will not keep watching Netflix late at night, or stay discussing best compostable nappies when it's time for my "me time".

Boundaries say - I am not ready for sex, but I'd love to give eachother a massage (whatever sort of massage you'd TRULY like :)



MAKING REQUESTS

Making requests when you feel vulnerable can be hard. And for historic reasons women have tended to avoid confrontation. Requests are best when they are specific and delivered in a neutral tone.

Here are some sentence starter examples to help you with opening conversations around boundaries, sharing the care, negotiating time off whether for physical recovery, work or filling your fun cup.

- This baby thing is hard. I'm exhausted. You seem exhausted too. What can we do to better support each other's wellbeing? Date night? Take alternate mornings or nights off for exercise or hobbies?
- Can we talk about our financial situation so we can proactively manage both of our career plans in the next few years...
- I'd like to discuss our shared responsibilities of housework...
- I need rehabilitation time from the birth and it could take more time than I realised. Could you please read this section so you understand what support I need?
- I'd like us to better balance our kids' needs for care and attention between us as parents.
- Would you regularly take the kids for 'x' amount of time please on 'x' days because I need to... go to painting class/work/do my rehab exercise. (That's the proactive approach).

If things are getting out of balance and a bit heated...

- It's not ok to yell in front of the baby. I know we're stressed, but I'm leaving the room and we should talk later.
- Would you please regularly take the kids for 'x' amount of time please, as I am burning out/getting angry with the kids when I know if I had some time off I would parent better

WILD NOTE: 75% of divorces are requested by women so if you think that the power of boundaries isn't useful, think again. Married women statistically report lower levels of relationship quality than married men. Women need to change the narrative on their wellbeing & pleasure. Of course you can ask other family & friends for support too. Everyone's situation is unique.



||

THE DAYS GO SLOW BUT THE
YEARS GO FAST

Anon

S E C T I O N

STAGES
OF
RECOVERY

C H A P T E R

03

WHAT NOT TO DO
AFTER A BABY IS BORN

There will be demands on you to recover & get moving, but there are things that you really ought not be doing post-birth, until you have done some of the important wound healing.

Let's take a quick look across what has changed and remind ourselves of the different areas you will need personal boundaries for as the days turn to weeks, then months.

YOUR BODY'S CHANGES

Your Pelvis Actually Opened

Relaxin has helped soften your joints and your pelvis actually had to open a little bit more to fit the baby/ies through the birth canal. Yes, your bony pelvic opening was as big as a dip container. You know the sort that you feed your mates on movie night - that you can all fit your corn chips into to dip at the same time... well, your pelvis needs to recover. This can cause your hips to feel unstable and initially even walking may feel hard.

Traumatised Tissue

Soft tissue trauma needs time to heal. Episiotomy (the cutting of the perineum), tearing, bruising, womb bleeding, hernias, avulsion of ligaments. 50% of women displace their organs with some type of prolapse. You could just grab the tissues! Rest, seek appropriate support and modify as you need until your symptoms improve.

Pelvic Floor Stretching

No matter what sort of birth you had, the weight of baby on your pelvic floor (approx 6kg) has stretched that muscly hammock that supports your posture, your bladder, your womb and rectum. 75% of women experience incontinence (leaking urine or poo) after birth. With pelvic floor exercises these symptoms can improve although some women will need extra support from a physio and "Om Pelvic Floor First" will be your new mantra.



Postural mis-alignment

The weight of the pregnancy has pushed your posture to a misalignment that may impinge on your back. That's why it's important we don't lift anything too heavy too soon. Recovering optimal posture will make physical activity safe and will also ease any on-going daily back pain.

Abdominal Stretching

The circumference of your belly has taken your roundness to new levels of roly-poly. And that divine bundle has put pressure on your core muscles, from your deepest layer: the transverse abdominus to the obliques and rectus six pack. They look less like a 6 pack of beer now & more like a 6 pack of champagne. (C-section mamas have had the wrapper opened too). No abs means that postural misalignment, tiredness & sore backs need help.

WHAT TO AVOID



So what should you NOT do after baby is born?

Well, don't try to do it all by yourself. You are an independent woman and want to get moving, but tend to those urges. Also, this time can be the birth of gender bias (even if you thought you were equal before in your relationship). See that guy in the picture - he can wield a vacuum as well as you! Don't join 'parenting' with 'housework'.

So, **now isn't the time** to vacuum the house so it can be clean - when you are exhausted and physically impaired (possibly stitched up and bruised).

Now isn't the time to keep cooking dinner for everyone in your extended family, - when your body needs time off your feet to heal.

Now isn't the time to do shopping that requires you to take heavy loads to the car - when your pelvis is loose (those car baby carriers are hard work enough).

Now isn't the time to go running, even if you feel you could - when your pelvic floor is weakened (it can get weaker under pressure or hurt your back).

And **now isn't the time** to think about weight loss - when you and your baby need nourishment.

Remember your Support Wheel? This is the time to call in the village & make sure people around you know what is going on for you - so they know how to help. Ignoring the strain on our body means it will take longer to heal- as is the same for surgery or injury recovery.

C H A P T E R

04

RECOVERY TIMELINE

The physical recovery timeline. This guide was designed for you AND to be shared so people around you know more about the process of recovering from birth.

(Just like the little info sheet my hubby brought home when he got his tubes tied!)

The journey to recovery can be shorter for some but longer for others. Each journey is unique. You can't go over it, or under it, yep, you gotta go through it...





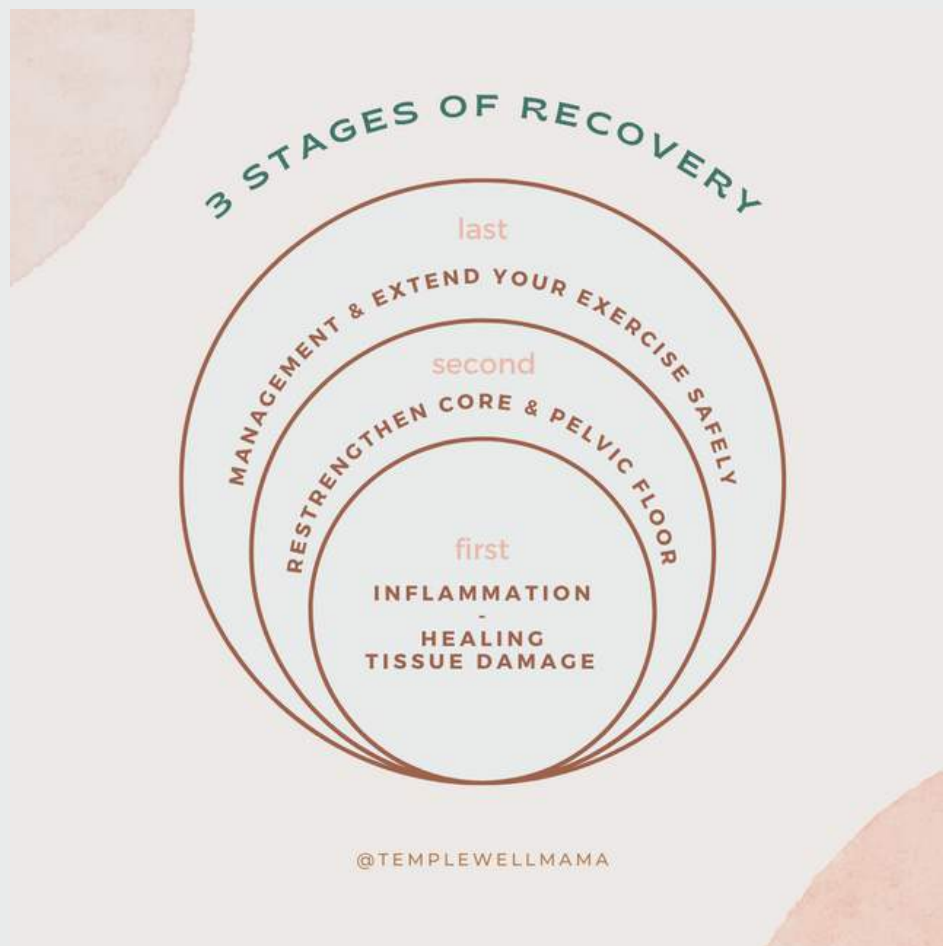
YOUR RECOVERY TIMELINE

STEP	1	REST, PROTECT - Wk 1 In the days after birth your body needs as much rest as possible to help healing of womb, muscles, tissues & pelvis
STEP	2	REST & BRACE - Wk 2 Being patient means your body can recover without the strain of 'doing' too much.- start with abdominal bracing, pelvic floor exs & short stints of moving around the home
STEP	3	RESTORE - Weeks 3-6 Aiming to restore function to the deep (TA & PF) core muscles in basic exercises is important. Stretch tight areas. Move gently.
STEP	4	RE-ALIGN - 2-4 mnths Rebuild the synergy of your core & realign your posture with body weight or light resistance. Stay low-impact.
STEP	5	RESTRENGTHEN - Mnth 4-6 Gradually progress exercise intensity &/or duration when your pelvic floor, pelvis and abdominals can withstand more pressure and activity. Stay pelvic floor first.
STEP	6	EXTEND - Mnth 6 onward, but review Do self-checks before you increase challenge, impact or heavier weight. *Pelvic issues or diastasis can take 1 year or more to resolve. You are not alone if still restrengthening.
STEP	7	EXTEND & BURN - return to athletic level REVIEW YOUR MANAGEMENT - ongoing Full restoration brings us to high impact, heavy loads, dynamic movement. Keep attuned to what your body needs. And dial it back or seek help if you experience issues.

Your unique timeline is yours, but biological principles of healing tell us that you will go through them.

Wound healing is a complex biological process that consists of blood clotting, inflammation, proliferation, and remodeling. And this is just one aspect of healing birth injury and strain. Again for those caring for you, as much as for you, keep in mind:

- Completing the 4 healing stages can take from 6 to 12 weeks and beyond
- The size of your uterus alone can take 6 weeks postpartum until it returns to it's pre-childbearing size
- Typically you might bleed for 4 to 6 weeks or more (see a Dr if it keeps getting heavier)
- C-section wounds take 6-10 weeks to heal
- Some women's bodies bounce back and draw their abdominal muscles back together in 8 weeks, while for others they can take 6 months to 1 year to heal a diastasis
- Prolapse can take 1 year to resolve but may persist & need more care
- Pelvic Girdle Pain can take 1 year to resolve but may persist & need more care





BODY-MIND-CULTURE RECOVERY

I know society doesn't really value your recovery

I had nearly pooped my pants in public a month after the birth, but there was no cheat-sheet to confirm easily with my husband and others that I am not supposed to be doing so much housework, or that I really, truly mean I. Can. Not. Walk. Literally. There was no list to say that my healing might take months - not days.

If women had penises you know that policies would change. You can bet birthing would be a highly valued job with paid time off and paid physiotherapy recovery plans for all men until they didn't pee their pants or hurt during sex. Surely. I know that if I was in power - that's what I would make happen! Culture needs to mend also. One country that does have it right is France, which offers ten sessions of 'perineal rehab' for FREE to all mothers. That is the right kind of "Oui!"

Honouring the unique blueprint of birth recovery

All Mamas have a unique recovery process. We know that women with different types of births, or more than one child, impacts on how their bodies recover. For example too much pushing in early labour can mean more risk to the pelvic floor. And epidurals create a flow on effect that increase forceps delivery and greater risk of tearing.

Birthing (and parenting) are contact sports. That's why mothers live in tracky pants. No, jokes aside. You may have been in the smaller percentage of orgasmic birthers (good on you!) and having the right support for your birth can make a difference to positive outcomes too. But...

- 20-50% of women report traumatic births.
- 3 out of 4 women report perineal trauma (tearing).
- 50% of women suffer pelvic organ prolapse.
- Almost 10% of women report Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- 15% of women report feeling depressed in the year after birth

If you experience any ongoing symptoms, such as pelvic pain or bladder and bowel problems, you should see your women's healthy physio or doctor - and know that symptoms may take time to develop. Psychological trauma, depression, anxiety, overwhelm & loneliness can all strike & it helps to process this & get support also.

Your recovery isn't to be rushed. Your recovery needs to be honoured. This isn't the time to push your very real self-care needs down. It is time to rise up and ask for more help if you need it. Doing a self-honouring meditation can help emotionally support you,

The very 'normal' act of women birthing is no normal feat. It is heroic. 9% of mothers experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder after birth (compared to 13% of soldiers in the Afghanistan war.) It is both miraculous and draining. Just because there are "love hormones" involved does not mean this is not the debilitating experience it is for many. Perhaps if we truly valued what women go through and gave them the systemic, economic, emotional and rehabilitative support women truly need, more mothers would thrive.

But in Modern society we have been enculturated to believe that our job is easy. We have inherited a "get on with it" & "do it all" mindset. We have been told to accept the depletion or depression. Even accept the incontinence by people profiting from injuries that we can recover from. Yet, we can feel better.

We are the beginning of it all. The creatrix of life. Women everywhere need this remembrance. Because current culture doesn't remind us, yet.



CHAPTER

05

EARLY DAYS - REST THEN RESTORE -

Week 1 - 4

From the bliss, exhaustion and injuries of the birth
we journey to, or recover in, our nest.

The birth needs to be processed. It is a time of watchfulness over your new
bundle and can be an emotional time.

But as much as possible - it is your time to lay down and let people look after you.

I recommend a postpartum doula who can support your physical & emotional
wellbeing (and baby/children), a cleaner (or extra hours if you have one already)
and someone else to manage meals & laundry.

Call in the village - like customs in many countries around the world -
mother care & parent care is characteristic of a positive community response.

You ought to have some focus on restorative exercises and definitely stay off
your feet as much as you can the first 2 weeks, as gravity will undo healing.

Gentle walks around the house/garden when you are ready help
ease you back into your body.



The Power of REST

Rest. As a modernised 'go-go-go' culture we are not very good at it. Postpartum is a time to recognise you have done the most miraculous thing - birth a being - and let your body recover. When this huge initiation of womanhood is honoured women can better thrive. Deep rest, keeping warm, having (shallow) baths and feeding yourself nourishing foods is so important in the early days.

Healing, Breastfeeding and Matrescence

Rest provides our body with the necessary healing time to regenerate collagen and to take pressure off of sore or injured joints/muscles. It also weaves our soul healing after this initiation. Kimberly Ann Johnson writes extensively on the 4th trimester and describes how many culture's rituals look after mothers in the first 90 days.

Our breasts - to the point of exploding as the milk comes in - remind us our bodies were designed for this. And our emotional selves are often on hyper-alert to care for this being. But this journey to motherhood is not done in the instant we birth. The journey into matrescence takes time, takes years. The strange sudden loss we feel as we look at our empty bellies and grieve housing life itself. Raw, we are called to care. Raw, we are called to give. **We need rest & support to make this transition a healthy one.**

Bleeding, After Pains and Pelvic Care Starts Now

The days after the birth is it's own beast. Here's some info in case you missed it from your midwife. Seek help with breastfeeding, baby issues or your body with any concerns.

- You will bleed (lochia) as your womb heals from the placenta tearing away.
- Use thick pads (you can even put these in the freezer to make 'padsicles' to help the swelling) and if your bleeding gets heavier not lighter seek treatment!
- The afterpains come thick and fast (multi-child women know this - you can take pain killers/anti-inflammatories)
- Make sure you drink water, use a urinary alkiliser (like Ural) to stop your pee hurting any injuries & keep yourself clean with water sprays, sponging down or sitz baths
- Hold your pelvic region (and your C-scar) to pass stools (you can also use a stool softener like Magnesium) and put your feet up on toilet rolls to get the right anorectal angle... (you'll thank me- particularly if you get hemorrhoids)



Time to Get Around

There comes the time to start getting mobile. If you have had a caeser then you will need to walk around the house every couple of hours to stop blood clots, but we all benefit from the oxygenation and bloodflow of a gentle walk. Your jelly belly will take time to reduce and you may feel very sore. Here are some first 'baby' steps for you.



Re-connect with Your Pelvic Floor

So let's understand that your brain's wiring may be a bit out of whack with this part of you now. **Imagining** the connection to the pelvic floor helps with developing the body-mind connection even if you can't feel the muscles work yet. For now, send your pelvic floor some love. OR start with some gentle squeeze and releases.

Abdominal 'Bracing'

Most women feel incapacitated due to losing muscular integrity in their posture when the baby is not holding things in place anymore. Like in the picture - our posture is weakened. Start with reconnecting to your pelvic floor 'lifting up' & then 'drawing in' your lower belly. Bracing like this is the start. Your awareness of the muscles and the function will develop over time. Remember to brace while you cough, stand up or later on as you lift anything.



Why Belly Binds, Girdles, Shorts or Belts?

Compression garments have a long history across cultures. They have been shown to improve recovery for c-section mamas and aid in comfort for all postpartum mums. They help with posture and reducing back pain, supporting you while the muscles and pelvis are loose. But the tummy muscles need practice to recover. You can wear pelvic support garments from weeks to months, but make time daily to move without it. And make sure it anchors on the hips.

In the early days...

take rest



connect



go gently



*Do my Restore
exercises*

THE RESTORE PROGRESSION



FOCUSING ON REST & HEALING
RESTORING THE CONNECTION TO CORE MUSCLES.
STRETCHING TIGHT AREAS TO REBALANCE FROM PREGNANCY

C H A P T E R

06

EARLY WEEKS - REALIGN -

From 4 - 12 weeks (2-3rd month)

You are completing the 4th Trimester.
This is the time for you to realign those deep postural muscles in your core.

Stretch out the tight bits, and re-balance with focused core work.
And that ole 6 week Dr check-up? That's way out of date - see your Dr and importantly your Physio and get the low-down on any key areas to work on as you get more active

- Keep your pelvic floor, core control and neutral spine as a priority- daily.
- Do your pelvic floor exercises in the shower or while breastfeeding!
- Abdominal exercise is focused on the deep transverse abdominals and pelvic floor
 - Stick with body weight, light resistance exercise
- Stay low impact and make sure you don't get pain, leaking, pressure downward or outward as you move or do exercises

- As well as pelvic floor contractions, make sure you relax your pelvic floor too.

POOR *Motherlode Posture?*



CORRECTLY
ALIGNED
SPINE & PELVIS



KYPHOSIS
BREASTFEEDING
MISALIGNMENT



LORDOSIS
PREGNANCY
MISALIGNMENT

Postural Alignment & Deep Abdominal Muscle Activation

Alignment of the spine is crucial in limiting injury and creating freedom of movement. Our posture is based on our 4 core muscles like a 'can' - the pelvic floor at the bottom, the deep corset-like Transverse Abdominus wrapping around our middle, the diaphragm at the top under the ribs and the spinal extensors at the back.

The Realignment phase means we are balancing out any of the biases in the body from the weight of the pregnancy (forward tipping pelvis, tightening of the lumbar and hip flexors) and the constant forward flexion tending to babe. Month 2 might be when you are 'cleared' for exercise, but you probably need to iron out some of these misalignments first or you might hurt yourself.

Common issues are seen in the picture above. Misalignment in the lower spine can create back pain and be a co-factor with incontinence. Spinal misalignment and the tilt of the pelvis needs core recovery to recruit the abdominals correctly to support proper alignment and get you safely active.

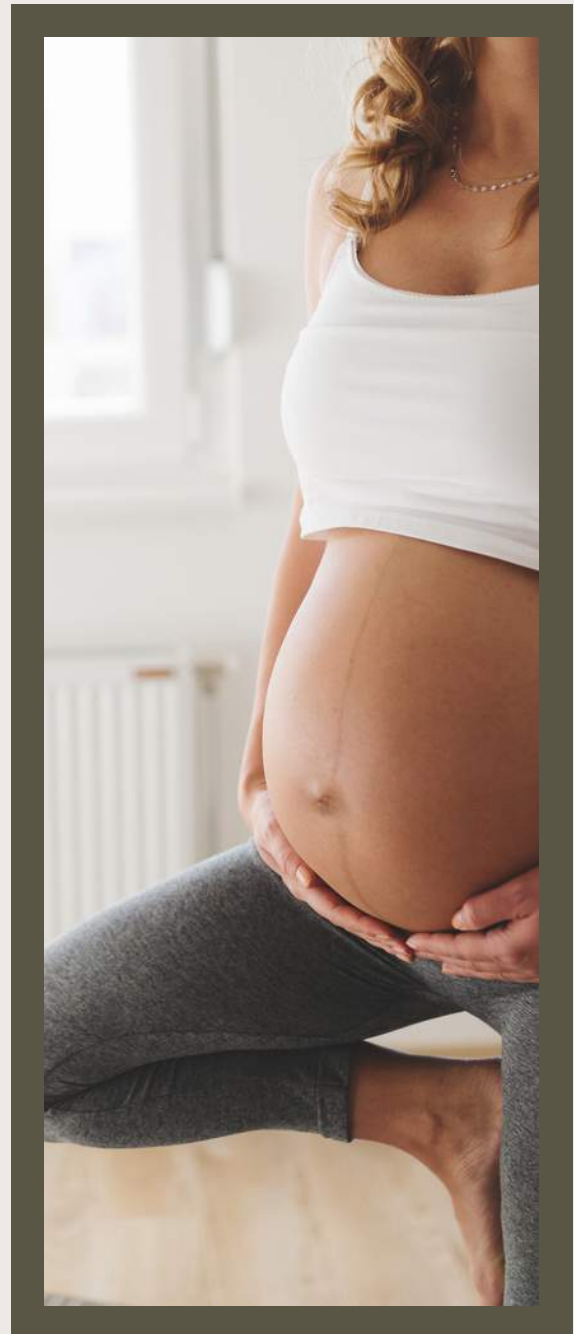
Make Stretching A Habit

One thing that will help you re-align your posture is stretching the tight parts of your body. Take arm stretches out to the side. Tuck your tail to stretch your lumbar spine. Lift your chest gently up to the ceiling. Drop your ear to your shoulder on each side. Stretch out your hip flexors with lying 'runners stretch'. Do these stretches daily and see how it improves.

COMING BACK TOGETHER

Rectus Diastasis or DRAM it is called. The separation of the mid-line or linea alba. After the pregnancy it's quite natural to have a gap and expanded tummy muscles. BUT, we need to bring it back together with good tension to support our posture, eliminate back pain and create freedom to function with strength.

Post-birth most healing happens within 8 weeks. After that it's up to us to help our bodies along with safe core exercises that focus on deep postural muscles. Some research shows up to 45% of mothers have a diastasis still at 6 months postpartum **so modify movement & exercise** and get familiar with the self-check on the next page to monitor your progress or seek help. Some small percentage of mothers will seek surgical assistance.



Diastasis Self- Assessment

It is important to assess how your diastasis is going. Improving the tone is also important as well as the distance.

HOW TO SELF-TEST:

- 1 - lie on the ground with knees bent, feet on the floor hip distance apart
- 2- look up between your knees, lifting your head gently and holding
- 3- feel with your fingers on the midline to see what distance gap you have
- 4- notice if it feels loose or with tension
- 5- check on the belly button, 2" above belly button and 2" below

When the gap is 3 fingers wide or more get support from your Physio.

HOT TIPS:

Roll out of bed instead of jackknife to sitting, bend at the knees to pick up baby or things from the floor, lengthen your lumbar spine with a lil taituck when holding baby instead of resting bub on your belly verandah...



Checking your mid-line distance and tension can help you monitor your own progress but see a physiotherapist if it is 3 fingers wide or more, or you have concerns of a separation not healing, or the tension improving.

Diastasis Modifications

HOW TO MODIFY COREWORK:

With a 2 finger gap: stay away from big twists and extra abdominal pressure.

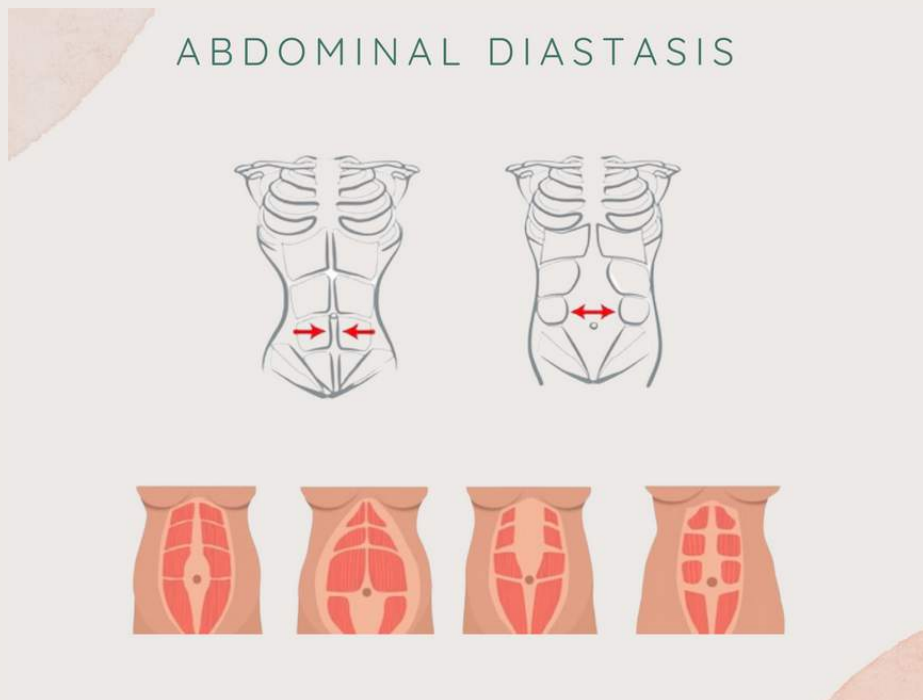
Stay away from planks, double leg lowers, roll-downs, sit-ups and backbends. Follow my Realign and Restrengthen series.

Keep your head on the ground for corework, until your core has come back to more optimal tension, distance and integrity.

Take much smaller & slower twists with good pre-tension before you twist - so as not to have the 2 sides of the belly pull apart from each other. OR eliminate twists for now.

If a diastasis persists: Opt for training that does not increase your intra-abdominal pressure too much (like heavy lifting, boxing or planks would). Seek support from a trained professional.

Be careful of exercise that stretches the arms overhead for rib-flaring.

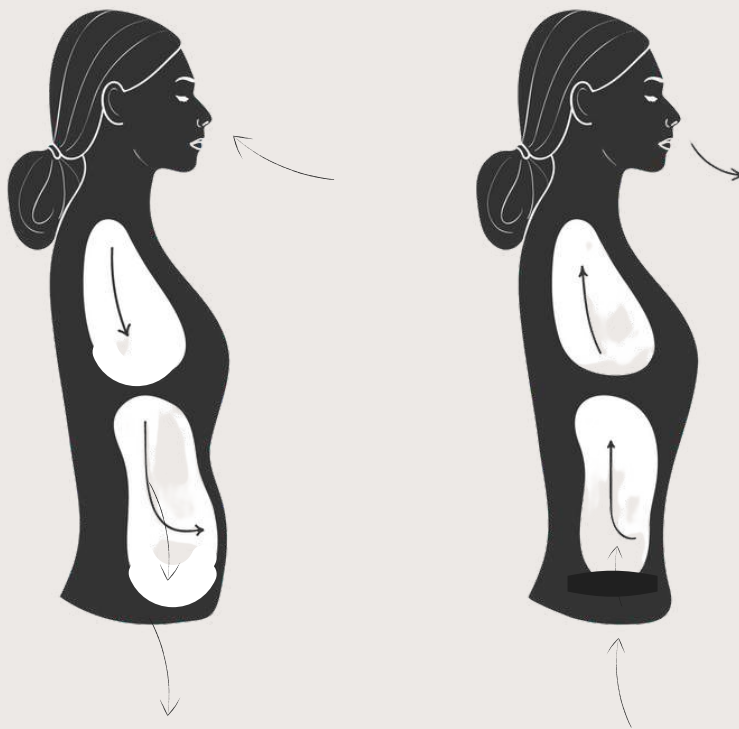


Doming or coning where your midline pokes out - is a sure sign that your core is not supporting your exercises. Dial it back for a while, focusing on pelvic floor and deep core muscle control, then try again in a few weeks.

CORE SYNERGY

Connecting the breath with the core

Core synergy comes from the pelvic floor and the diaphragm working together as we breathe. As you can see in the diagram our inhalation creates a pressure internally and our pelvic floor has to withstand this intra-abdominal pressure to stay functioning properly. Intra-abdominal pressure can be caused by deep breathing, spinal flexion, as well as exerting effort, coughing, laughing or sneezing. When we exert effort we must have the pelvic floor LIFT rather than push down to link the synergy with the diaphragm and protect ourselves from prolapse.



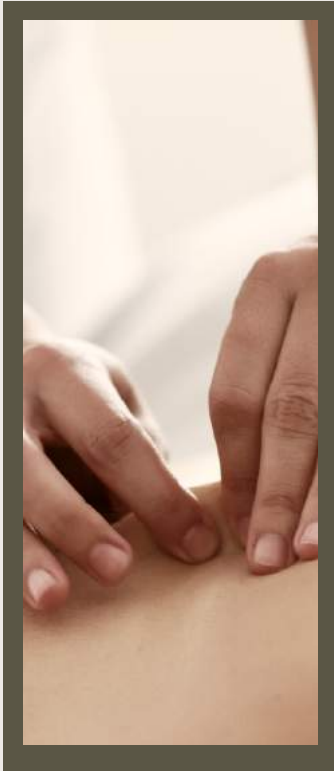
Breathe in
Pressure down & out
Diaphragm pushes contents down
Pelvic floor may relax slightly
but needs to hold the pressure above

Breathe out
Pressure decreases
Diaphragm lifts to expel air
Pelvic floor lifts slightly

BREATHING EXERCISES

Some research has shown deep diaphragmatic breathing to be as successful as other core exercises to create post-birth core recovery. I include breathing in the Progressions. Make sure the **pelvic floor lifts when you exhale** - research shows even physiotherapists can muddle it and squeeze and bear down instead. Include a correct synergistic breath before you exert in your exercises too.

C-SECTION MASSAGE



C-Section Recovery requires some extra rest and attention

The cutting through of the layers of the tummy and womb means that you will also feel sore from the surgery. Gentle walking is important so you don't get blood clots & by week 3 you might feel like a 15 minute wander.

As mentioned earlier, specific postpartum supportive garments can help you feel better but also make sure your clothes do not press right on your scar.

The same principles apply to realign and restrengthen your core, but take some extra care with your core pressure and getting active as returning to activity too quickly can cause the incision to open. Healing takes at least 6-10 weeks.

As you heal scar tissue will form and it is important that you massage your scar to manage adhesions & improve abdominal functioning. Adhesions can lead to urinary frequency or hip/back pain.

When to start massaging? 4-8 weeks postpartum.

Start with gentle movements around the outside of your scar.

Progress to massaging the scar between your fingers when you feel comfortable and do this 5 mins daily for best results. Continue to check in that the fibres are moving freely, then massage weekly or monthly.



TAMING YOUR EGO

Bowing Down to the Re-alignment Stage

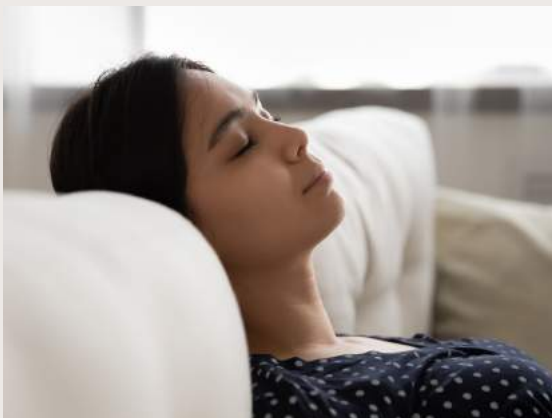


So this is the Re-alignment phase, but really you are also aligning yourself to the demands of your baby. It's not uncommon amongst the women who I have worked with to feel like their recovery is going too slow. I felt that too. But, it's a process and you have to move through the stages. When you know that then you can apply your powerhouse attitude to do it well.

If the medicine your body needs is REST, then keep resting. IF your physio says only lift weights sitting down. So be it. Your babe was loving up your belly-house for 9 months and some people believe a proper postpartum recovery time is 9-12 months.

I will tell you what won't help your recovery:

- Pretending that you don't have to recover and going back to your old activity levels too early
- Doing misguided fitness guru workouts (any trainer that has you doing situps for postnatal is deluded, uhmm Tracey Anderson...)
- Thinking **all** pilates or yoga classes are safe for postnatal bodies because they're low impact
- Not following your specialist's advice if you have complications/rehab needed
- Doing exercise you or someone else 'thinks' is good, but your body is giving you signals it's not
- Comparing your recovery to anyone else's



weeks to months

Sitting down for weights is a great option if you have pelvic floor dysfunction - pain, instability, incontinence, prolapse



Do the Realign Pilates at the back of the book

Bridges activate glutes and pelvic floor in a safe way



Building up deep core alignment with modified abdominal exercises, like this inclined push up, is less strenuous on tummy muscles & pelvic floor



THE REALIGN PROGRESSION



REBUILD THE SYNERGY OF YOUR CORE & REALIGN YOUR POSTURE WITH
BREATH, BODY WEIGHT OR LIGHT RESISTANCE. STAY LOW-IMPACT.

C H A P T E R

07

HOLISTIC RECOVERY

What we say 'no' to is equally as important as what we say 'yes' to
as the days and months roll by.

Our movement options & our lifestyle choices like nutrition, self-care, sleep
routines, etc all have an affect on our wellbeing.
(Don't forget to call in support!)

I encourage you to also prioritize 'down-training' your nervous system which
gets a battering with babies needing us so much.



PLAN for
nourishment,
rest,
support,
& energising
movement

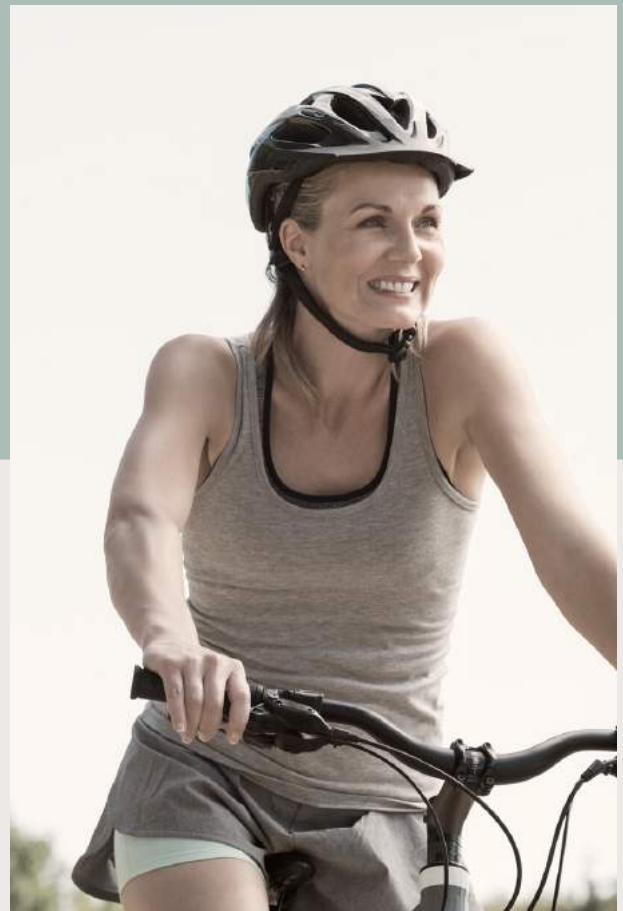
Yes! Co-Factors FOR Healing

Nutrition is important. Ayurvedic holistic principles promote warming foods - bone broths for collagen repair & soft whole foods with easy digestion. Keeping up water/fluid (around 2-3L/day) not only limits constipation, but not enough fluid can increase irritation of the bladder. Don't forget to continue to rest for tissue recovery, downtraining your nervous system and nourishing your energy - perhaps even try acupuncture to increase vitality.

Whole foods, fruits and vegies rich in nutrients, help replenish our bodies when the adrenals are low. Cortisol is a big part of the birthing process, and hopefully the home environment with additional support that you've called in will help keep the cortisol low and the oxytocin (love) hormone flowing. Licorice Root Tea can support hormone balance, so can adaptogens like Holy Basil. I love the Magnesium supplements by Majka for relaxing nerves, improving mood and managing stress.



TRY
GENTLER
OPTIONS
FIRST



Limit

Co-Factors AGAINST Healing

Food will effect you in so many ways from mental health to how you go to the toilet. Stodgy food- too many carbs/meat. not enough fresh veg and a lack of water can clog your system and create constipation. When you have hard stools you are likely to strain on the toilet and push your pelvic floor down, worsening any pelvic floor or bowel dysfunction.

If you are coffee person you need to know that the high levels of caffeine can work in the opposite way and can smooth your bowel. If you don't have strong pelvic floor muscles yet this can create incontinence issues. When coffee is consumed early in the day or in excess it can also wear your hormonal stores down and add to depletion.

Why watch out for wine? Besides that it is not recommended for breastfeeding mothers, it also can wreck your blood sugar balance before bedtime and wake you up in the night. And sugar... too much and inflammation will ensue, rather than healing. Stick with natural sweetness in fruit or sweet vegies.

As my post natal wellness mentor says:

Ask yourself when does the sugar or carb monster come?

When does the stress monster come?

Have healthy options available and get support to lower stress triggers!



AVOID THESE TIL SAFE



*Exercise for the weakest link
which is likely your pelvic floor -
add in small doses to test progress*

C H A P T E R

08

THE MONTHS START TO ROLL ON

- RESTRENGTHEN -

Months 3-4

Recommendations from physiotherapists or gynecologists will say to wait between 3 TO 6 MONTHS - before increasing the pressure on abdominal exercises, intensity of strength training or jogging/dynamic locomotion.

Practice proper form, and all else will follow in time.

Keep being patient. Celebrate the small wins.

Protect the weakest links. Progress gradually.

You are doing amazing things Mama!

Make sure you do self-checks from this chapter, and Physio check-ups when you want to progress if you have doubts or concerns. And never train through pain!



START WHERE YOU ARE AND WORK WITH WHAT YOU'VE GOT

Some women will be ready to extend fitness by now whilst others will still be working on maintaining gains in postural muscles and pelvic stability. Either way, 'Pelvic Floor First' is your new mantra Magic Mama. Leaking and any pain or heaviness means you've gone too hard too soon. And group fitness classes will test you to keep listening to YOUR body.

Keep your head on the ground for core work until you have the core control to manage the intra-abdominal pressure. Try the self-check coming up in a few pages.

Monitor how heavy you are lifting and the exercises or activities you are doing are not degrading any wins and winding back any progress made.

"Coaching for mindset is critical in the postnatal phase" says FitPro KellyAnne Turton, who suffered a prolapse many months after she returned to exercise. She feels that women can get "stuck on the external and thats when they let go of intuition".

The learning here is to listen to your body as you progress exercise & activities.. In the picture below we are moving from stage 2 to 3... progressing the load, duration and intensity gradually.



Progressing the Months

Only go to split leg options (including jogging) when your pelvis feels more stable and you don't feel pain.



Use no weights or lighter weights than you are used to with more reps in the earlier months



Modify exercises if you need to decrease shearing on the pelvic joints or pubic area. Keep hip-width apart for pelvic floor safe.



Do the ReStrengthen exercise progressions

Re-Thinking Core Work



Think:

Length and Inner Strength.

Control the Core.

Stay 'crunchless' to manage
any diastasis or pelvic floor dysfunction.

THE RESTRENGTHEN PROGRESSION



Mama Stage #3

Restrengthen

GRADUALLY PROGRESS EXERCISE INTENSITY &/OR DURATION WHEN YOUR PELVIC FLOOR, PELVIS AND ABDOMINALS CAN WITHSTAND MORE PRESSURE AND ACTIVITY. STAY PELVIC FLOOR FIRST.

SELF TESTS FOR PROGRESSION

By 4-6 months many of you will want to get moving. Knowing when to progress safely is key. If you have back pain, pelvic/hip pain or other pains or discomfort you should leave high impact exercise like running, ball sports or lifting heavier weights for a bit longer. (If you have multiple kids you may wait much longer). You also should have the pelvic floor strength to keep intra-abdominal pressure controlled while you exercise.



High Impact Self-Test

To test: Make sure you have had a few glasses of fluids and with a full bladder. An hour after your last drink do 5 star jumps/jumping jacks. Add a cough to the last 2. IF you leaked then continue with pelvic floor exercises and low impact, core restore exercise for a few more weeks before you try again.

Remember it's also your pelvic stabilisers/hips/glutes/core that need to co-ordinate well for activities like running, skating or ball sports. Test you can hop on one leg easily and without pain.

Curl-Up Self-Test

Award winning physio and fitness expert Lisa Westlake says that you can return to curl ups after at least 3 months, however they must not be performed until "core and pelvic floor are fully functional, abdominal separation is resolved, you are free of back or neck pain and recovered from c-section"

To test - Curl-up and Check: pelvic floor is lifting not pushing downward, tummy is sucking inward, not doming and has good centre line tension with less than 3 finger width gap. You want to be recruiting all layers of the abdominals not just the outer ones!



C H A P T E R

09

RETURNING TO PREVIOUS ACTIVITY LEVELS

6 months to 2 years.

Returning to previous levels of activity is perhaps the holy grail of motherhood. After my first child I bounced back, but after my second son, I remember crying at my physio after 9 months " I just want my body back".

For every woman it is different.

And the news is - that the magic mama that you have been birthed into & that, through your matresence, you become, learns to work with her new body. Because mamas are resilient. Bodies are resilient. And we can learn to adapt and keep our spirits full with family and our new bodies as a part of our lives.

The Extend stage challenges the whole body and takes activity to levels of greater load and/or intensity. I break it into 2 levels.

Extend has extra challenge but not quite as high-impact.

Extend and Burn is athletic and high-impact.

Note: Some women with extensive pelvic floor damage (inc prolapse) or dysfunction may stay at Restrengthen stage which is pelvic floor safe - low impact/head on floor.

They also may modify the Extend phase to stay low impact/pelvic floor safe, use pelvic support belts or use a pessary whilst exercising. Some may not return to previous levels of activity, but stay with pelvic floor safe exercise. You will need to modify activity to your Physiotherapists guidelines.



Practice Makes Progress



As you exert more and more you may need to **"rest to reset"** partway through your activities. Resetting your core and continuing when your muscles are recruited correctly is a perfect way to build stamina with correct and safe technique. So too with moving into high impact - take it bit by bit. Start with short 10 minute runs, 1 game of tennis, 1 surf... & over time duration increases. It is also best for your pelvic floor if you exercise when you are not already fatigued.

You should be without pain during and after activity except for regular muscular exertion. You should not have worse incontinence during or after. Dial it back, and if you are unsure seek professional support.

I highly recommend you work with a trained post partum exercise practitioner & have a women's health team to support you so you can restrengthen safely. They can confirm you are on the right track.

Progress happens with practice. And time. As you repeat exercises you strengthen not only the muscle fibres, but the fascia that supports the muscles in the network of the whole body. As well as that you are practicing neuronal networks & balancing hormones!

When we feel good, we have so much more to give our family and those around us.

After much care with an Osteopath, my women's health Physiotherapist and taking the time to restrengthen my pelvic floor I am glad to say that I ran my first 17km trail run as a mother. But each birth and postpartum journey is unique - and you have it in you to find joys that suit your body at any level. It could open up new adventures for you.



Try the Extend exercise progressions



What activities do you look forward to trying or getting back to?



THE EXTEND PROGRESSIONS



Mama Stage #4

Extend

SELF-CHECKS CLEARED.
INCREASE CHALLENGE,
IMPACT OR HEAVIER WEIGHT
THEN MONITOR HOW YOU FEEL.

FULL RESTORATION BRINGS US
TO HIGH IMPACT, HEAVY LOADS,
DYNAMIC & ATHLETIC
MOVEMENT. DIAL IT BACK IF
YOU EXPERIENCE ISSUES.



Mama Stage #5

Extend & Burn

S E C T I O N

PELVIC
LOVE

C H A P T E R

10

LOVE YOUR LADYPARTS

Let's get to know some of the challenges you will face
and the tools you want in your toolkit.

We get juicy in this section and describe some of the wonderful
anatomical and functional aspects of your body so when you get to the
exercises you can do them in a more mindful way.

Let's get the 'low-down' on how to exercise the 'down-low'.

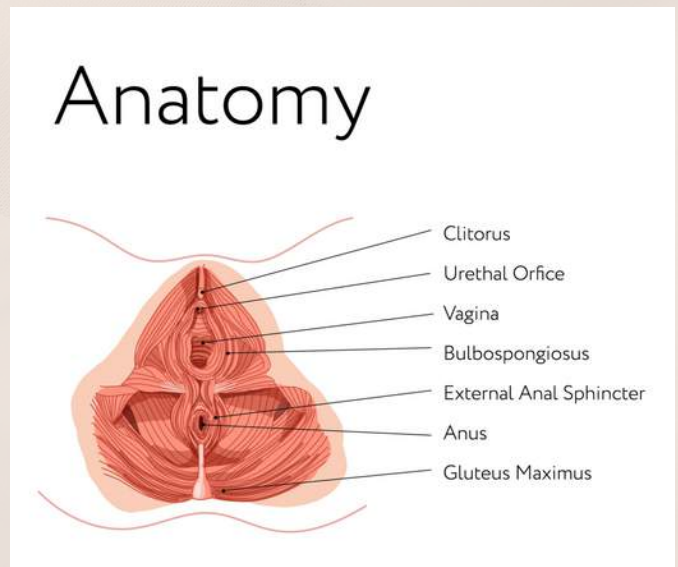
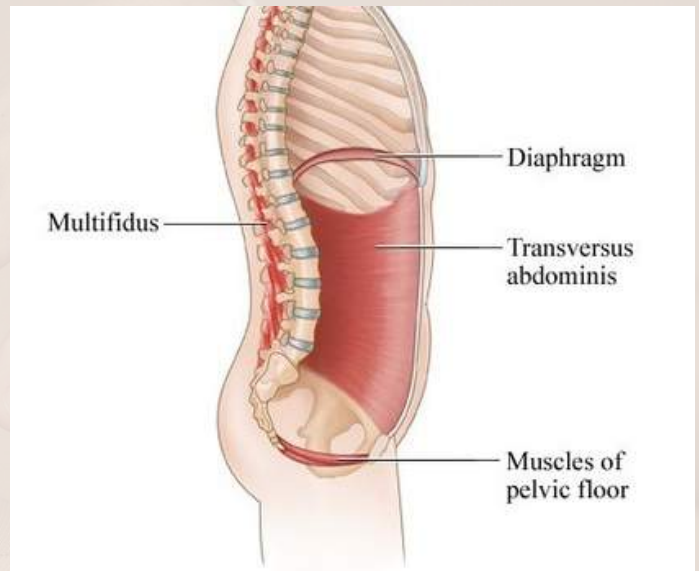
YOUR LADYPARTS

Pelvic floor muscles are the layer of muscles that support the pelvic organs, such as the bladder, bowel, and uterus. These muscles span the bottom of the pelvis from tailbone to pubic bone and across the sitz bones.

Wrapping around the muscles for the anus (the anal sphincter) and urethra (the urethral sphincter), the pelvic floor muscles help prevent the uncontrolled release of faeces and urine.

The pelvic floor muscles are also important for a number of other reasons, including:

- Sexual function - your PC muscle gives you lots of nerve feedback for pleasure and other smaller muscles fire on orgasm
- Support for the baby during pregnancy and releasing during birth
- To work with the abdominal and back muscles to support and stabilise the spine



LOVE YOUR LADYPARTS



What did you know before birth about your pelvic floor?

Unless you have done a sex workshop prior to parenting territory, birth may be the first time you get to know these lady parts. And hey now is as great a time as any. Our pelvic anatomy, our hormones and sex organs have been so taboo and even now the unseen nature of our cervix, womb, clitoris and pelvic floor can mean women pay less attention to these parts of their bodies. But it is a juicy time to get to know them and love them. With 25-70% of women reporting they fake orgasm, it seems many of us still can do with building a better relationship with our juicy anatomy down there, kids or no kids!

How's Your Pelvic Floor?

There are some factors that can increase the risk of pelvic floor problems developing after birth. "These include: • use of forceps to assist with the birth • use of a vacuum device to assist with the birth • 3rd or 4th-degree tears (tearing of the perineum that is close to or includes your anus) • a baby with birth weight more than 4kg • long pushing stage of labour" - Continence Foundation.

Urinary Incontinence affects 75% of mothers

Fecal incontinence affects 12.9% of Australian women.

**Whilst there is an 80% cure rate for women who see physiotherapists
70% of people with urinary leakage do not seek advice and treatment!**

50% of women over 40 suffer prolapse.

20% of women suffer pelvic pain from tight pelvic floor muscles

Urinary incontinence and prolapse risks increase each birth you have. Being overweight and lifting heavy weights increases risks too. Did you know having a caesarian only lowers incontinence issues by 10% - in case you thought a c-section might let you off the hook! Even women who don't have kids have Exercise Induced Urinary Leakage (#CrossfitPee) that can be helped.

PELVIC FLOOR DYSFUNCTION



hypotonic

This means that your pelvic floor is not strong enough to support your organs, posture or continence. These muscles weaken from childbirth, breastfeeding, menopause & trampolining (though I wouldn't expect all at the same time).
1 in 3 women wet themselves.

strengthen

Pelvic Floor Exercise Programs have been shown to radically reduce and improve symptoms from incontinence and prolapse and is the first conservative measure to use. Physiotherapists can guide you with individualised plans.

hypertonic

Hypertonic muscles can create havoc on pelvic tension and interfere with passing urine, stools and cause pain, including during sex. Core exercises, pelvic (birth) trauma, endometriosis & stress can all cause tightness. 1 in 5 women have pelvic pain from overactive muscles.

release

Releasing the full range of the pelvic floor and lowering tension assists in managing these tight symptoms. Stretches and relaxation to downtrain your muscles are important, as are habit change and treatment from a Physio for your unique situation.

PELVIC FLOOR TOOLS



strengthen

- Pelvic Floor Exercises - slow & fast
- True PF Ex includes relaxing and contracting (Kegels only do lifts)
- Unconscious pelvic floor activation with more 'global' movements
- Synergy with core breath - deep abdominals & PF engage when exhaling

jade egg/pearls/weights

Physios and tantra teachers have something in common - they both might ask you to hold a weight in your vagini/yoni. Physios can program weights and tantra teachers will sway toward traditional jade eggs & benwa balls made famous by the Chinese Empress. Or you might hookup to biofeedback and your iphone...

releases

- Reverse Kegels or Pelvic Floor Drops
- Pelvic & hip opener stretches
- Pelvic Floor relaxation
- Relaxing to let jade eggs, dildos enter
- Internal massage (Physios can do this)

dildos

Physios can also give you specialised programs to relax and release your muscles. Using dildos or your finger to self-massage when you are comfortable may help too. Be aware that trauma can be stored. As you massage gently build a loving relationship with yourself.

GUMBOOTS ARE NOT FOREVER

Stress Incontinence

Stress incontinence is when you put pressure (stress) on the pelvic floor - whether through:

- jumping
- laughter
- sneezing/coughing
- internal pressure (planks, lifting weights)
- squashing organs down onto your PF (sit ups, running)

AND you leak from the pressure.

The stress makes you leak, not your bladder.

A pelvic floor strengthening program may take 5-6 months of dedicated exercise to make gains says physiotherapist Michelle Kenway.

Urge Incontinence

Urge incontinence is when you feel the urge to urinate - whether:

- you just went to the toilet
- you are unlocking the front door
- you are doing the dishes

BLADDER TIPS

- Keep drinking your 2L fluid daily
- Do your pelvic floor exercises to help support the neck of the bladder in the right place.
- **Defer the urge by: pressing on the perineum, raising onto toes, lifting the ribcage upward**

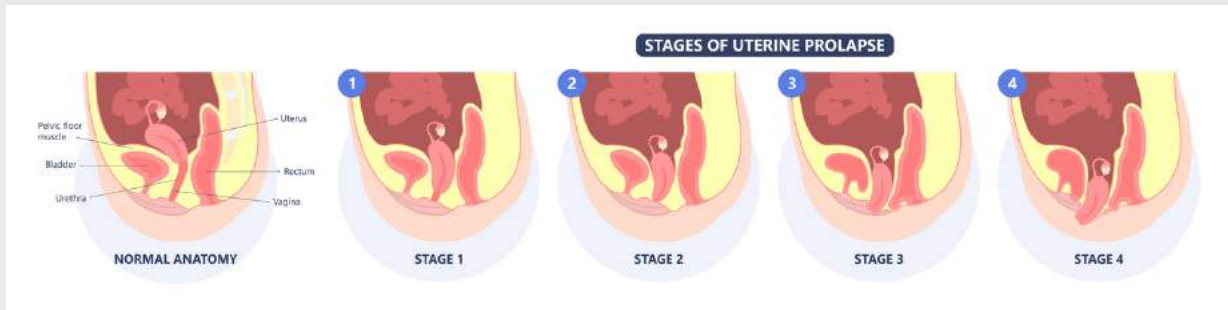
With your toileting aim for no more than 5 times/day and once at night, says incontinence expert. Dr Pauline Chiarelli.

What if you are leaking?

Test your pelvic floor muscles are working by stopping the flow of urine when you are on the toilet. Only test this way to find the muscle. Then practice PF exercises to retrain your muscles & bladder. Stick to pelvic floor safe exercise - low impact, low weights & keep you head down for corework. Refrain from exercise that exacerbates symptoms. You can progress when symptoms pass. Regress if symptoms come back. Seek support from a Physio.

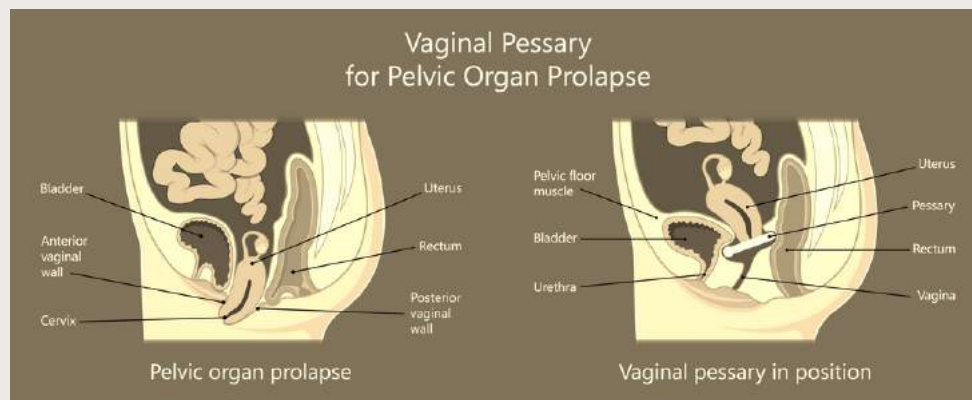


PROLAPSE 101



What is a Vaginal or Rectal Prolapse?

Vaginal prolapse is defined by the vaginal vault or womb falling lower than its normal position in the pelvic area, as you see above. A rectal prolapse is the rectum falling below the pelvic floor. These dysfunctions can be felt like a dragging, heaviness or like a lump between your inner thigh. You may see your prolapse or you may not.



Treatments for Prolapse

Different levels of prolapse need different treatment. Let's demystify a common solution. If you do have a prolapse you may benefit from having a pessary fitted by a women's health physiotherapist. Women who take this route find benefit whilst they are still working on their physical recovery. Some women may need gynecological surgery, but **physiotherapy treatment is the first conservative line of treatment** as options like hysterectomy may still lead to further prolapse.

1. Do pelvic floor exercises every day to strengthen the muscles and ligaments of the pelvis (remember it takes months for recovery)
2. Avoid constipation by eating healthy and drinking 2-3L of water
3. Reach and stay at a healthy weight.
4. Avoid activities that stress your pelvic muscles (such as heavy lifting, inc your child)
5. Do pelvic floor safe exercise
6. See a Women's Health Physiotherapist

EXERCISE THOSE LADYPARTS



pelvic floor exercise routine

- 1 - Relax the pelvic floor (lowering/releasing)
- 2 - Lift & squeeze your pelvic floor muscles
- 3 - Hold until you fatigue (between 3 - 10 secs)
- 4 - Breathe naturally in the hold
- 5 - Release and rest a couple of secs
- 6 - Perform x 10 lifts and holds

The longer holds help develop overall muscle endurance. Try and make sure you feel every second you are holding the lift, or it may mean you have fatigued (and not realised).

The fast muscles fibres need a workout too - so you can build quick pathways to switch on the pelvic floor before you sneeze or cough or get up.

For Fast Response -

- 1 - Lower the pelvic floor
- 2 - Lift & squeeze on as fast as you can
- 3 - Drop/release
- 4 - Rest for 2 secs
- 5 - Repeat Steps 2-4 x 5

TIPS:

- Start short & progress.
- Be aware and keep softened in your glutes, inner thighs, shoulders and face!
- Weak muscles have been proven to improve with 3 x sets of 10 exercises per day.
- Make sure you build in relaxation between sets.
- Try lying down, sitting, then standing.
- Map in the habit - when in the shower, when you breastfeed, or when you get breakfast!
- For pelvic pain you will need to map in relaxation and stretches.
- Some people who have incontinence may have mixed weakness, see your physio.

Keep up the Core Awareness

Pelvic floor dysfunction/prolapse can happen to women who first feel fine but go back to exercise without proper pelvic floor & core attention. So congrats! You are in the leading group of educated women. (If you suffer see a physio- this is a guide only).

S E C T I O N

LITTLE
PAINS

C H A P T E R

11

OTHER BODY AILMENTS

Extend your mindfulness to your whole body. If you feel tightness, soreness or weakness, modify to work within comfort. The motherhood body can cause stressors and strains throughout, so here's some pains to look out for and how you can help remedy them.

Keep them in check because little pains can turn into big pains.

(Seek support if your pains persist.)

PELVIC PAIN

LOW BACK PAIN

Sacroiliac Joint Pain, Pubic Symphysis Pain, Pelvic Instability

Pelvic Girdle Pain effects up to 80% of mothers. It's way under-diagnosed and under-treated within the healthcare system. Stretching of the pelvic floor and deep abdominals may lead to a decrease in the ability of these muscles to stabilize the pelvic joints and hormones like Relaxin keep ligaments softer than usual. Pains from PGP can take up to 1 year to resolve postnatally. There are also about 7% of mothers with PGP that may suffer disability from pregnancy still years after birth.

Women can: wear specialist pelvic support garments -compression shorts, belt or girdle which can help create force-closure on the SIJ and lower discomfort.

Targeted exercises to promote the strength of the hip stabilizers and core is recommended by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Post Natal exercise programs are designed with this in mind, but if pain persists, a physio will tailor a program for you.

Acupuncture has also shown some evidence to reduce pain and improve functional outcomes.



TIPS for HIPS

If you feel instability or pain when you stand on one leg then take on these lifestyle tips:

Reduce non-essential weight bearing, walking too long, standing too long.

Be careful when you get in and out the car or bath.

Get dressed sitting on the bed.

Get a suitable compression belt (from a physio) or your doula might have options for belly binding.

Wear low heeled shoes.

Avoid climbing stairs.

LUNGES NOT FOR YOU?

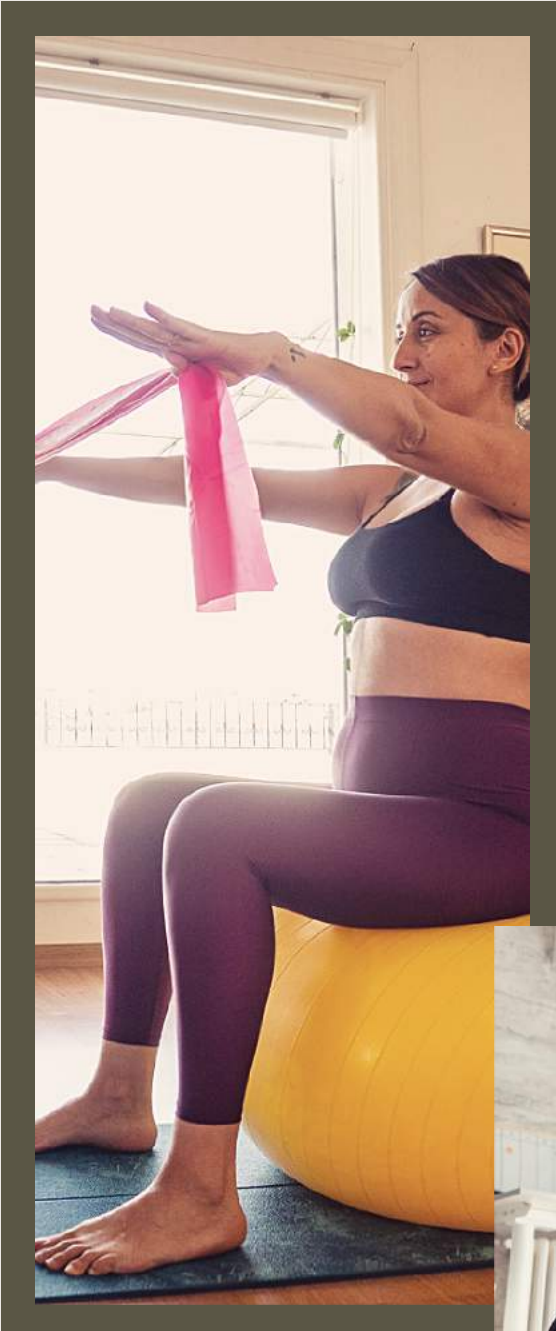
Pelvic Instability & Load Transfer

Whilst lunges are usually great functional movements, there may be times in your postpartum journey that you get pain in the pelvic region & exercises like single leg standing (eg tree pose in yoga) can do more harm than good.

Listen to your body and change to both feet on the ground (try squats) until you feel like the closure on your pelvis has strengthened or pain has subsided before you try again.

Focus on workouts with glute bridges, side lying hips/glute and core-work either on your back or in "all-fours". Add in low reps and low depth as you progress into lunges. Sit, if you want, for arm-work with bands or weights.

Do the Realign Pilates Progressions.



Hips that softened and opened for birth need strengthening progressively.

HARD WORKING WRISTS

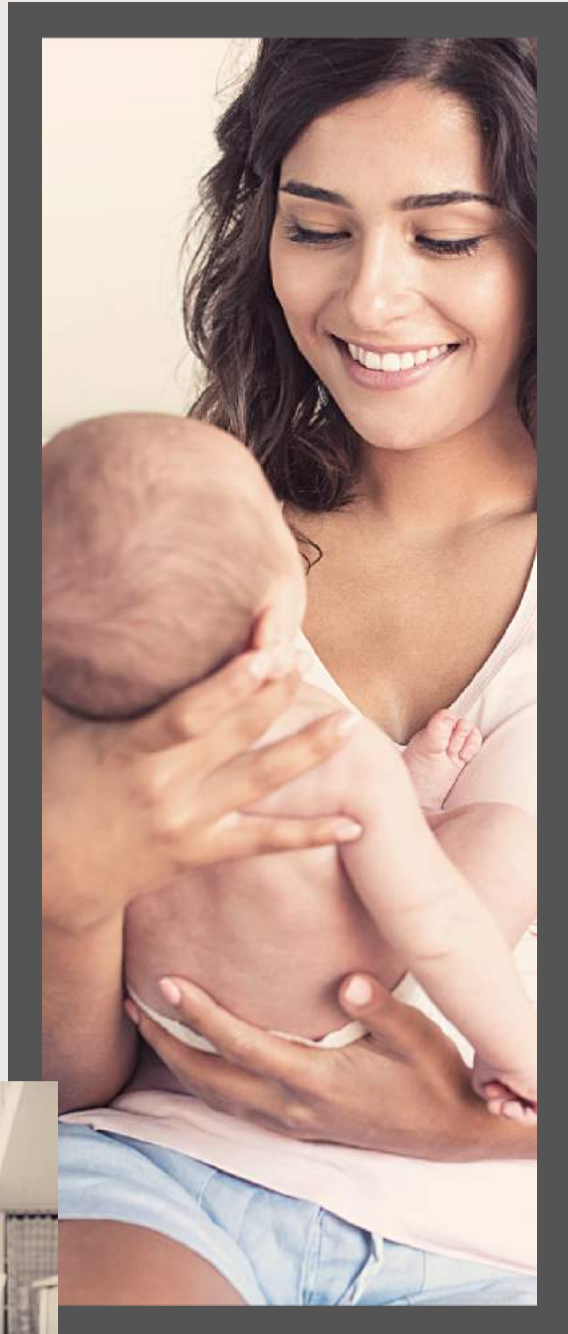
There are several wrist and hand complexes that can affect pregnant women & mothers.

De Cerveins, Carpal Tunnel and other tendonitis are painful issues that can rear their head with the extra load of mothering. Self-care that includes strengthening the back, and stretching and releasing the tight front line of the upper body is important. Managing your physical habits can help too. See your Dr if you get pins and needles, numbness.

Modify your breastfeeding positions and carrying habits to relieve neck, shoulder & arm stress. Side-lie feed.

Remember to stretch your shoulder girdle and pectoral (chest) muscles.

Try a wrist brace or modify exercise to forearms, knuckles or straighter wrist positions.



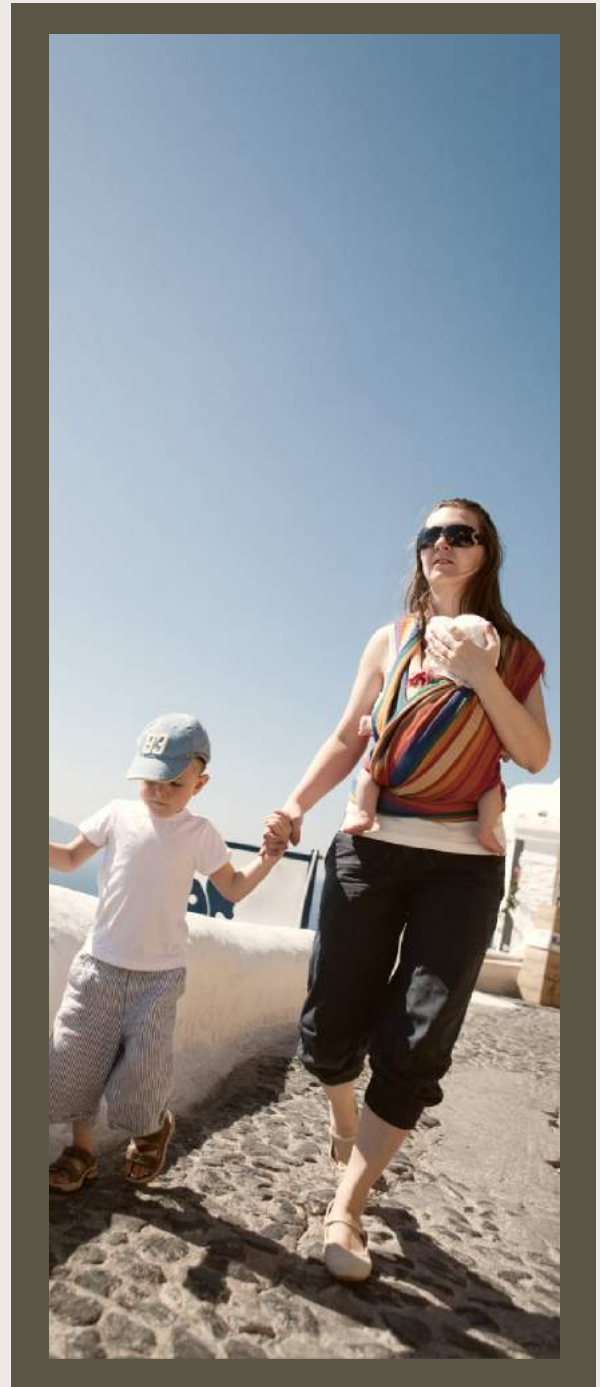
MULTIPLE CHILDREN

We know having multiple children can increase risks on pelvic floor, diastasis and Pelvic Girdle Pain. In fact about 10% risk per subsequent child. But doing the right exercise can help us stay core-strong and more inclined to recover well.

Remember daily habits effect us as well as other activities.

TIP: Mothering doesn't always require us to lift or carry our babes/toddlers. Bend down to cuddle or comfort. Use a pram for both kids when needed!

If you are a constant 'hip carrier' consider babywearing as a way to connect and carry in a more balanced way. Look after your back, with a little tail tuck and brace your core!



S E C T I O N

LET'S MOVE

C H A P T E R

12

THE PROGRESSIONS

The Magic Mama 'workouts' are as much a 'work-in' with a focus on internal postural muscle restrengthening that build over the weeks and months of your physical recovery and enable you to return to physical activity that you love safely.

The Progressions are based on post-natal exercise physiology, Pilates core technique and many are exercises recommended by pelvic health physiotherapists.

Each progression has a suggested timing on my Recovery Roadmap Timeline that is based on research on postpartum recovery, but I am most interested in you progressing the level of challenge on your body when your body is ready for the progression (rather than matching a rigid date on a timeline).

*You might use some of these exercises to modify a Pilates class.

THE PROGRESSIONS

The aim is to progressively strengthen, progressively challenge. Do 30 mins x 3 times a week or maybe 10 mins daily - until you feel core control improve - before you move onto the next Progression.

Check the timeline for milestones you might align to. Check the description of what is suitable as you progress through the stages.

Follow these guidelines.

HOW TO FOLLOW THE EXERCISES

-

Listen to your body and aim to get the technique right

-

Work to a point of warmth, stop before you fatigue and inner core muscles lose proper form

-

Work to your edge without doming or pressure down.

-

Use the time you have available.

-

Do both sides of your body!

-

Make sure you do the self-tests to know when you can add curl-ups, increase intra-abdominal pressure or go higher impact

-

Listen to your body's signals and symptoms.

-

Stop if the exercise creates any pain or make symptoms worse & dial it back to earlier stage exercises for a few weeks before trying again

-

Keep up with doing pelvic floor exercises for as long as you need



OTHER ACTIVITY?

You may be doing other activities alongside the Progressions. If you are wanting to return to dynamic activities safely then your core restore should not be left to chance.

Match your other activities to your level of core control whilst you still continue with your Progressions.

Here are some suitable activity examples for each stage.

RESTORE

gentle movement, pelvic floor exs, meditation, walking

REALIGN

Postnatal yoga/postnatal pilates, walking, cycling, slow low-impact bodyweight exercise, therabands

RESTRENGTHEN

Dancing, SUP, swimming, cycling, low impact, light weights/higher reps, reformer pilates, modify regular classes as you need,

EXTEND

Do the Self-Tests to know how to extend safely - low-impact might go to high impact, Jog might progressively turn to a run, curl-ups might be included in your corework, boxing, mountain biking, surfing, weightlifting, low or high impact cardio, The foundation of Extend continues to include more and more athletic activities as you continue to strengthen your core.

It is also worth noting that doing a couple of exercise sessions per week will be of limited benefit if you do not adjust lifestyle factors and daily habits.

Finally,
If you have any doubts see your Women's Health Physiotherapist -
whether for incontinence, heaviness, pain in the lower back,
legs, shoulders or wrists.

They can also help with any uncertainty about correct pelvic floor &
core activation to make sure you stay dry, pain-free & with a clear
program to work on! Osteopathy is also a great treatment for PGP.

It's time to change the mindset that
one check-up is enough post-partum -
or any old bootcamp or physical activity is ok.
Mamas need specialised care to be
healthy, vital and happy! Reach out to a team and you will feel the
flow-on effects to you and your family.

I hope this guide supports you with knowledge & inspiration on your
mamahood journey for months and years to come.
Go well Magic Mama...

Dominique XXX





MAGIC MAMA



THE RESTORE PROGRESSION



Mama Stage #1

Restore

FOCUSING ON REST & HEALING
RESTORING THE CONNECTION TO CORE MUSCLES.
STRETCHING TIGHT AREAS TO REBALANCE FROM PREGNANCY



01

slow breathing w pelvic floor activation

As you inhale focus on relaxing the pelvic floor and as you exhale draw the pelvic floor up and in.



02

chest opener stretch

Keep your ribs floating down toward the hips. *Do this in any position that feels good - standing, sitting or lying on your back.



03

belly lifts in all fours - straight spine

Activate the deep tummy muscles as you draw them in toward the spine and hold for 10 secs. Add a gentle tail tuck if you like. Release. IF you have more than 3 fingers separation only lean forward, rather than on all fours.



04

all fours arm lift - straight spine

Keep your tummy braced pulling toward the spine and feel the lower back lengthen slightly as you lift one arm to the side or in front. Release back to floor.



05

side waist lift

Lift up through the side waist nearest the floor. TIP: Use a pillow and place that under your belly in side-lying for a gentler version, then lift up through the waist. You might not lift much initially. Over the weeks you will lift more.



06

leg lift and lower

Activate the sidewaist to lift & core to stabilise, lift and lower the leg x 10.



07

pelvic tuck

Lying on your back draw your pubic bone toward your belly button. Roll your tailbone up as much as is comfortable. Do this on a soft bed if you need.



08

single leg drop outs

Stabilising through the core, keeping the hips facing the ceiling, lower one leg out to side at a time whilst keeping the hips neutral. This works the deep transverse muscles. *If you have pubic pain, then leave this & move onto #9 instead.



09

single leg slide-aways

Stabilising through the core, keeping the hips facing the ceiling, slide one leg out at a time whilst keeping the hips neutral. This works the deep transverse muscles



10

pelvic floor release and contract

Connect to the pelvic floor muscles. Drop and release the pelvic floor and tummy. Squeeze and lift the pelvic floor muscles (you may feel a slight co-contraction of the lower abdominals, but relax the rest of the body as much as possible.) Hold for 3-10 secs. Repeat a few times.

!

test your diastasis to track your progress

Remember the Diastasis Check in the earlier chapter? Now is a good time to do that and build self-awareness. It will give you that measure to know if you need support, how much to modify exercise and you can track your progress over time.



THE REALIGN PROGRESSION



REBUILD THE SYNERGY OF YOUR CORE & REALIGN YOUR POSTURE WITH BREATH, BODY WEIGHT OR LIGHT RESISTANCE. STAY LOW-IMPACT.



01

breathing w pelvic floor activation

Increasing a little more power in your breath - as you exhale more strongly with your lips pursed, focus on the feeling of your pelvic floor lifting. Allow the pelvic floor to release as you inhale.



02

chest opener stretch

You can use a theraband, pillow, towel or pair of long activewear leggings to add assistance to your stretch. Lift overhead and draw down. If you have diastasis or a sore back, make sure you are trying to draw in your tummy and keep ribs down.



03

spine stretch

Curl the spine, tucking the tail and letting ribs reach toward the hips. Return to neutral spine.



04

single leg (or arm) extensions in all fours

Working against gravity we hold the brace of the tummy muscles to stabilise the spine as we extend the back leg. If you have pelvic pain, keep both knees on the ground and do an arm lift version instead of extending the legs (like Restore #4).

05

side waist lift

You can start with your hips on the ground and lift, repeating, Press up out of the shoulder. Stack your hips.



06

leg lift and lower - then into circles

Keep your spine stabilised and pelvis 'quiet' lift and lower the leg, then move into 8 x circles of the foot in each direction.



07

clams

Stabilising through the spine, knees bent anchor the heels together. Open and close the knees without any rocking through the hips or spine.



08

bridge with inner thigh press

Roll the spine vertebrae by vertebrae starting with the tail bone until the spine is long between the shoulders and knees. This can be slow and integrate a pelvic floor and inner thigh squeeze. Lift/squeeze. Lower/release.





09

knee drop outs

Stabilising through the core, keeping the hips facing the ceiling, lower one leg out to side at a time whilst keeping the hips neutral. This works the deep transverse muscles. Hold your arms above your shoulders.



10

single leg march

Stabilising through the core, keeping the hips facing the ceiling, lift one bent leg at a time to knee over the hip. Keep the deep transverse muscles steady.



11

single leg extension with foot on floor

Stabilising through the core, keeping the hips facing the ceiling, lift one BENT leg at a time over the hip and then extend away.



12

triceps in all fours

Keep your tummy braced pulling toward the spine and feel the lower back lengthened. Pull your arm with a light weight in to a 'row' next to the waist. Add a tricep kickback with the elbow bent.



13

squat

From STANDING gently hinging at the hips, keep your tummy stabilized and bend til the weights reach your knees. Straighten and repeat.



14

bicep curl

As we lift any weights we exhale on exertion & breathe out on release. To integrate the pelvic floor more consciously exhale before you start the exertion. Keep your spine in neutral. Initially you can squeeze on as you lift. Over time, your resting tone of the pelvic floor will increase. As you progress lighter weights will not challenge the intra-abdominal pressure, but you will always need to make sure your pelvic floor supports any weight you lift.

THE RESTRENGTHEN PROGRESSION



Mama Stage #3

Restrengthen

GRADUALLY PROGRESS EXERCISE INTENSITY &/OR DURATION WHEN YOUR PELVIC FLOOR, PELVIS AND ABDOMINALS CAN WITHSTAND MORE PRESSURE AND ACTIVITY. STAY PELVIC FLOOR FIRST.



01

chest opener stretch

Connect a deep diaphragmatic breath with a spine and chest stretch. Inhale open the chest, exhale move into the tail tuck in exercise 02 below.



02

integrated pelvic floor and tail tuck

Joining after the chest opener - As you exhale squeeze your palms together at the same time as a pelvic floor squeeze, with tail tuck. Release the pelvic floor as you lengthen the spine and breathe in again. Repeat.



03

chest opener stretch hold

You can draw the shoulders further back and down as your tummy strengthens, giving greater stretch to your pectoral muscles and strengthening up your back.



04

bird dog

As your core strengthens take alternate arm and leg off the floor at the same time. Return to start position in all fours and repeat other side. Keep your back long. Think length not height! Its a core exercise. You want to maintain a neutral spine.



05

side waist lifts

You can keep your knee dropped on the floor if you like, or try lifting up in full elbow plank. You lift and lower the hips or you can hold at the top to build stamina.



06

clams

As you strengthen try your clams on your elbow. Or if you are tired lie down for these, no worries! You can also lift your heels, so your clams are 'floating'. Keep your hips 'quiet' and eliminate rocking by switching on your core.



07

clam with leg extension

Start with a clam opening the knee, add a leg extension then return to close the clam. (Also a gentler version side lying if you need).



08

leg lift and lower into circles

Keep your spine stabilised and pelvis 'quiet' - lift and lower the leg, then move into 8 x circles of the foot in each direction. (Also a gentler version side lying if you need).

09

bridge

Press the hips high and lower. Add a hold and extend arms overhead and back but hold the ribs down!



10

leg drop outs with arms o'head

Stabilising through the core, keeping the hips facing the ceiling, lower one leg out to side at a time whilst keeping the hips neutral. This works the deep transverse muscles. Hold your arms above your shoulders or keep them wide on the floor.



11

single leg drop downs

Lengthening the spine, switching on the deep muscles, start with legs overhead and lower one away and bring it back. How far you take it depends on how controlled and wrapped in your core is. The stronger your core the further away the legs can go. Check you don't dome!



12

dead bugs - single leg extension

From 'table top' (both shins parallel to ceiling) alternately extend each leg. As you strengthen consider taking your arms overhead as you extend your leg and bringing back to centre with your leg.





!

check separation & pelvic floor before curling

Remember it is unsafe on a tummy diastasis and pelvic floor to curl your head up before you have tension and control. This exercise is not recommended before 3-6 months but may take longer. Seek support if you are uncertain.



13

marches with oblique twist

From 'feet on the floor' lift one knee and twist your armpit toward your knee. Make sure you have deep pelvic floor and corset muscle activation then twist.



14

standing tricep row and kickback

Standing pitch forward with a bend at the knees. Row, extend to tricep kickback and repeat. Watch you keep your chin in and ribs down. Give a little squeeze of those shoulder blades into the spine.



15

arm series

Exhale to exert! Bicep Curls, Overhead Press (single or double), Rotation from Front to wide Platter.



16

plie to point

Strengthening the transfer of weight from one leg to the other is key for functional movement. Slight turn out in the toes can switch the pelvic floor on some more. Keep your squat narrow to keep it pelvic floor safe.

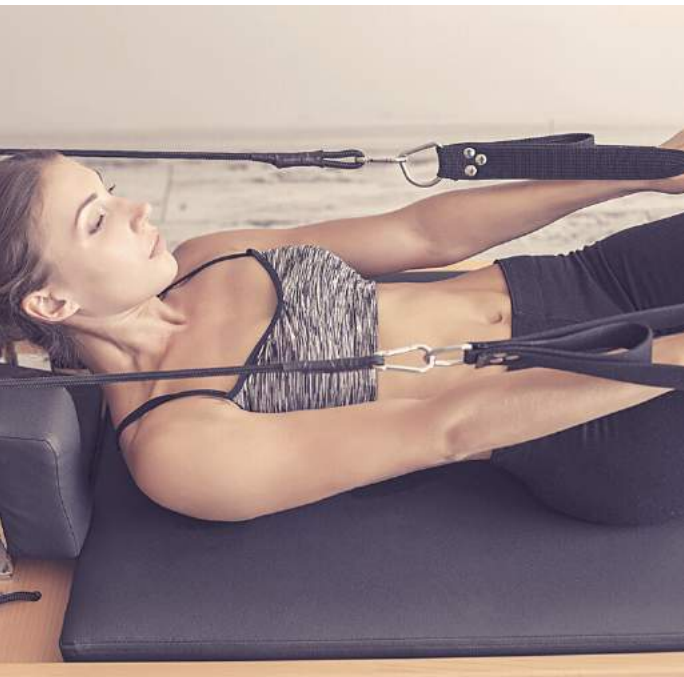
SELF TESTS FOR PROGRESSING FROM RESTRENGTHEN TO EXTEND



High Impact Self-Test

To test: Make sure you have had a few glasses of fluids and with a full bladder. An hour after your last drink do 5 star jumps/jumping jacks. Add a cough to the last 2. IF you leaked then continue with pelvic floor exercises and low impact, core restore exercise for a few more weeks before you try again.

Remember it's also your pelvic stabilisers/hips/glutes/core that need to co-ordinate well for activities like running, skating or ball sports. Test you can hop on one leg easily and without pain.



Curl-Up Self-Test

You can 'usually' return to curl ups between 3 and 9 months, however they must not be performed until "core and pelvic floor are fully functional, abdominal separation is resolved, you are free of back or neck pain and recovered from c-section.

To test - Curl-up and Check: pelvic floor is lifting not pushing downward, tummy is sucking inward, not doming and has good centre line tension with less than 3 finger width gap. You want to be recruiting all layers of the abdominals not just the outer ones!

*

Note: Extending to high impact/high abdominal pressure might not ever be suitable.
EG If you suffer pelvic organ prolapse or continue to leak - or menopause might effect your ability to do this intensity safely later. Always monitor symptoms & seek help.

THE EXTEND PROGRESSION



WITH THE 'CURL UP' & 'HIGH INTENSITY' SELF-TESTS CLEARED.
INCREASE THE CHALLENGE, IMPACT OR HEAVIER WEIGHT
MONITOR HOW YOU FEEL & REGRESS IF YOU NEED.



01

breathing w pelvic floor activation

Increasing a little more power in your breath - as you exhale more strongly with your lips pursed, focus on the feeling of your pelvic floor lifting. Allow the pelvic floor to release as you inhale. Try 10 fast pumps of the exhalation.



02

chest opener stretch

You can use a theraband, pillow, towel or pair of long activewear leggings to add assistance to your stretch. Lift overhead and draw down. This is not suitable for diastasis.



03

side stretch

Connect a deep diaphragmatic breath with a spine side stretch. Inhale reach to the side - opening the ribs with your full breath. Exhale move back to standing. Lift up and over. Think curve with length not 'bent'.



04

bear hover w toe taps

Start in 'all fours' and lift the knees off the mat a few inches. Keep your back long. Its a core exercise. Drop your knees back down and then lift again. If you can stay lifted try to take alternate toe taps to the side or extend behind.

05

bird dog
with weights
(add elbow to knee)



06

side waist lifts
with weights
(hold in side plank &
add leg pulse lifts)



07

knee to elbow
all fours
(want more?
take your hand
up to the ceiling)



08

bridge
with weights
(want more?
add a march
or single leg lift
while holding bridge)





09

dead bugs with weights

From 'table top' (both shins parallel to ceiling) alternately extend each leg and arm.



10

curl ups

!

ALL THE EXERCISES IN CURL UP CAN BE DONE WITH YOUR HEAD ON THE MAT TO BE PELVIC FLOOR SAFE. (Watch for doming too!)



11

toe taps with curl up (want more? add straight legs)



12

single leg extension (want more? add triceps with weights)



13

single leg balance tricep row & kickback

Loading one leg at a time we work on deep hip stabilisation as we work our thighs, glutes, hips, core, arms and back in this combo.



14

squat to bicep curl

You can get wider in your stance and heavier with your weights as you progress. Exhale to exert is the golden rule. Straight spine.

15

overhead press

Keep a tonic on the pelvic floor if you are recovering PF strength



“

Mamas need to put their wellbeing at the centre of their success - as mamas - and in all the roles they play in life.

Dominique -
TempleWell Mama

C H A P T E R

13

SOME SPECIAL CARE

Bonus Specialist & Pelvic Floor Safe Screening Checklist.

-

Self-Coaching Playsheet.

Physical Therapy/physiotherapy provides the first line of conservative care for continence or prolapse issues and so much more. Surgery - the most invasive measure for prolapse - is a lot of the time able to be avoided if we rehabilitate our muscles correctly with the support we need. (Which is a great thing because surgery is the last port of call - often causing more flow on damage.)

I also include a Self-Coaching Playsheet here to help you manage motivation, blockers and well-being goals you'd like to achieve.

MAGIC MAMA

Safe Exercise Screening

BONUS
Coaching Playsheet

- My postpartum screening
- ▼ My pelvic floor screening
- Well-being Coaching Playsheet

The information you give on these screening forms helps create a picture of the stressors that your sacred and powerful body has experienced. These experiences are honoured. I recommend specialised health support where it is needed or modified safe exercise programming with professionals - whether in a Magic Mama program or your own local women's fitness studios.

Let's make sure you have the right support for your wellbeing and find ways forward that will light you up with motivation for achieving your postpartum wellbeing goals.



When should you return to exercise? Ask yourself these questions...

How long ago was your most recent child's birth?

At any stage you ought to start with rehab, rebuild and then restrengthen. In the first month rest & gentle movement - then progress as your core recovery strengthens. See my recovery timeline for more details.

Types of Delivery/ies: (vaginal, csection)

Both births have consequences for the pelvic floor as it has carried about 6kg for months. C-section needs a little more care before abdominal exercise.

PostBirth Bleeding finished

You want to be past this stage before you 'exercise'. Stay with Gentle mobility & walking.

Have you had your 6 or 8 wk check up and been cleared for exercise?

A Dr will give you basic clearance, but most women need specialised programs before hitting group fitness. If it is months later, you may still want to check with your physiotherapist before you start something new.

Have you seen a womens health physio post-birth?

I highly recommend you do. As well as massage, they can advise on core recovery & exercises to avoid/do, ultrasound your pelvic floor activation & give individual plans.

Breastfeeding status

If you're still breastfeeding it impacts on joint flexibility - go gently and don't overstretch

Experienced postnatal depression now or before?

Exercise can help manage depressive symptoms, but reach out if you need extra support - don't suffer alone, seek parenting support and consider counselling

Experienced a traumatic birth?

Your body, mind and soul need healing time. Safe exercise can help when you are ready. Consider counselling or physiotherapy for treatment.

REST
REST & BRACE
RESTORE
REALIGN
RESTRENGTHEN
EXTEND

*The Magic Mama
Stages of Safe
Return to Exercise*

TICK IF YOU CURRENTLY, OR HAVE EVER, EXPERIENCED
ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:



- High/low blood pressure
(dizziness, faintness, clots)
- Carpal Tunnel
(wrist/finger pain or tingling)
- Upper back/neck/shoulder pain
- Lower back pain
- Joint pain
- Knee pain
- Coccyx damage or pain
- Sacrum or Sacro Iliac pain
(top of buttocks)
- Sciatica
- Nerve damage from birth -pudendal
- C section wound discomfort/numbness
- Episiotomy, Tears, Perinium pain
- Separation of abdominal muscles
- Effects of gestational diabetes
- Unexplained bleeding
- Low iron levels
- Piles, haemorrhoids, constipation, varicose veins
- Prolapse - Uterus, Bladder, Rectum, Vagina
- Incontinence - Lack of Bladder or Bowel control

If you have ticked any of these you will need to see a health professional IE -Doctor and/or Women's Health Physiotherapist. You will also need to manage your exercise and recovery post-natally with a trained professional.

Did you know that 1 in 3 women experience incontinence?

And 1 in 5 women suffer pelvic pain from tightness.


Around 50% of post natal women will experience some level of prolapse.

Certain exercises that you may think are good can cause and indeed worsen these problems.


Pelvic floor health, strength, vitality and education can empower your sexual self too!

If you tick the second list - go and see your Women's Health Physio in your area.

**IF YOU TICK YES TO ANY OF THESE Q'S, PRACTICE PELVIC FLOOR SAFE OPTIONS..
(THE REALIGN/RESTRENGTHEN STAGE & PROGRESSION, LOW IMPACT, LOW WEIGHTS)**

- Are you currently pregnant?
 - Have you given birth?
 - Are you going through menopause?
 - Have you had gynaecological surgery?
 - Do you have a history of lower back pain?
 - Have you ever injured your pelvic region?
 - Do you often suffer constipation?
 - Do you have a chronic cough or sneeze? (asthma, smoking..)
 - Are you currently or have you been for any length of time overweight?
 - Have you frequently lifted heavy weights at work or in your fitness programs?
 - Do you have a prescribed pelvic floor exercise program from a Womens Health Physio or Continence Advisor?
- 

IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS SEE A PRO PHYSIO-THERAPIST.

- Do you accidentally leak pee when you exercise, play, laugh, cough or sneeze?
 - Do you need to get to the loo in a hurry - or not make it in time?
 - Do you find it hard to hold in your pee when you get an urge?
 - Do you constantly need to go?
 - Do you find it difficult to empty?
 - Do you accidentally lose control of your bowel?
 - Do you have a feeling like a bulge or heaviness, discomfort, pulling, dragging or dropping in the vagina?
 - Do you suffer pelvic pain during or after sex?
 - Do you have reduced vaginal sensation?
- 

TempleWell MAMA

WELL-BEING SELF-COACHING PLAYSHEETS

Start by congratulating yourself! Write a little about what you have already done to improve your wellbeing/health/fitness postbirth?

List the first 5-10 words that pop into your mind about how awesome you are that you birthed, or how you feel when you have done something you never thought you could do...

What might get in the way of you improving what you want for your body postpartum?
(EG habits? self-talk? necessary activities? other obstacles? timing? money?)

What strengths, new beliefs or practical strategies could you work with to overcome these obstacles?

TempleWell MAMA

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Which specific wellbeing goals are your *priorities right now in your heart of hearts*?
(Here's some I could possibly list to get started...) Tick or list no more than 4 priorities!

better sex

schedule physio

My heart says I most need:

no leaking

feeling more vital/happy

decreasing pain

lowering stress

losing weight

asking for more support

calmer moods

more physical activity

improve posture

more time off the kids

Describe what your body and mind feels like when it feels good:

When I feel my best my body feels...

When I feel my best my mind feels...

When I feel my best I feed my body...

When I feel my best I think...

When I feel my best my family are...

Who can I call on for support for my wellbeing goals? Sticking to actions is easier with some accountability, someone who cares and who can cheer me on...

What can't I wait to do when my health and fitness is where I want it to be?! (This is why I would commit to a program of exercises!)

TempleWellMAMA

● Actions for Health, Well-being and Fitness

Note your actions for the week here. What? When? How much?

HEALTH ACTIONS toward no dysfunction, no pain, no injury, healing trauma/stress.
EG - rehab exercises, asking for help, connection with others/specialists, rest, supplements

WELL-BEING ACTIONS building positivity
EG - sleep routine, time off kids, good food & water, exercise, friends, fun, nature, purpose, education

FITNESS ACTIONS increasing vitality
EG core restore, strengthening, stretching, walking, adding weights, classes to attend

Your Coach Assessment -

SAMPLE: FOR 1:1 MAGIC MAMA CLIENTS ONLY

Name:

Date:

PELVIC FLOOR

Wee Test:

Pelvic floor contraction/pulse:

Intrinsic breath with PF contraction:

Lateral rib breathing:

SAMPLE

CORE (set, breathe, exert)

Diastasis check:

2cm above BB:

On BB:

2 cm under BB:

SAMPLE

Single Leg Raise Test: doming? pelvic stability?

LUMBO-PELVIC

Posture:

Pelvic - Anterior or posterior tilted (fwd back nutated)

Thoracic - Extended or collapsed

Hop test - pelvic stability w load

Learn Move



*
MAMA, *honour your
temple well*



*"Start where you are,
with what you have
and do what you can."*

JOIN NOW

WHO AM I TO TEACH THIS STUFF?

Well, I am a powerhouse woman like you that wanted to recover her body so she could get on with life again. I soon realized that being a Mama was so much more than just recovering my body and that my whole being was challenged by this journey into motherhood. As a dance teacher, I learned Pilates and Barre instruction and delved into training on Pelvic Floor, Incontinence and Core Restore with PostPartum/Postnatal Fitness Professionals and Physiotherapists so I could serve mothers in world-class gyms, pilates studios and women's health physiotherapist centres.

But I knew there was more than just the physical and I studied Positive Psychology, Neuroscience, Coaching and Women's Leadership to bring myself out of the 'victimhood' of 'motherhood' and into a more enriched life with my family.

Motherhood and the journey of "matriescence," of becoming mother, is an initiation that has historically valued baby's wellbeing or father's wellbeing over the mothers'.

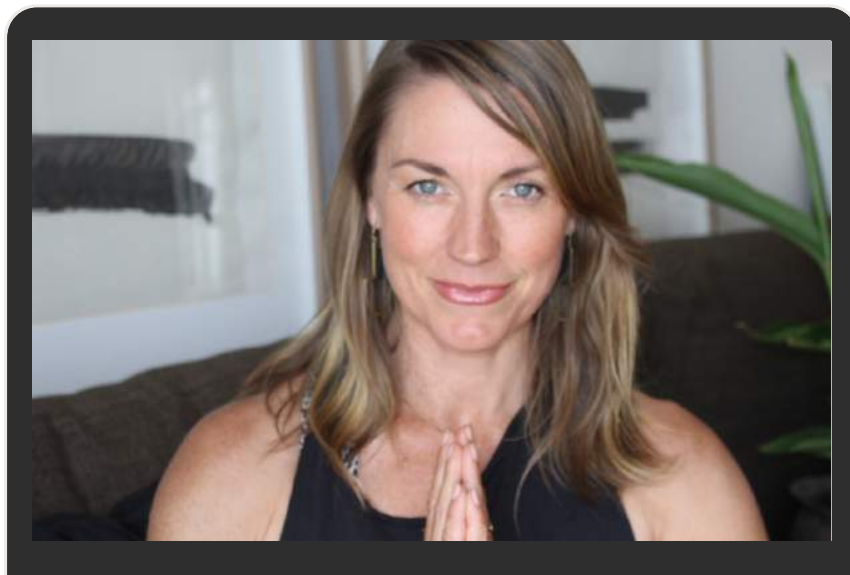
It's time for us to learn more, ask for more support
& enjoy a healthier body and mind as mothers.

Thanks for joining me Magic Mama.



INFORM
PHYSIOTHERAPY

PILATES | WOMEN & MEN'S HEALTH | MASSAGE



TESTIMONIALS



”

I couldn't recommend this to mothers more. I would say just start. She evoked something in me that really changed my life. I encourage you - If you're a mum and struggling with getting back out there or just getting it all done each day and being the person who you want to be. This could change your life.

Mel Johnson



”

Dominique's classes are always amazing. They are the perfect balance of a good workout and stretch using the body as a the main tool to build core strength. I love it!

Melanie Peady



”

Learning from Dominique recently, I was impressed by how knowledgeable she is on the all important topic of pelvic floor care for mothers, and how fun she makes learning about it! Thank you for sharing this all important wisdom for our health and wellbeing.

Kirstan Flannery, Co-Founder,
Birth for Humankind - Doula Support

REFERENCES

I couldn't have written this guide without the women (and men) who have come before and shared their experience, research, wisdom and knowledge. I am so grateful to have the support available to me that women in the past did not, however I also know we have a long way to go.

Books

Women's Waterworks Curing Incontinence, Dr Pauline Chiarelli, 2007
Mums' Shape Up, Lisa Westlake, 2012
Inside Out, Michelle Kenway, 2009
Pelvic Floor Essentials, Sue Croft, 2014
Saving the Whole Woman, Christine Ann Kent, 2006
Wild Feminine, Tami Lynn Kent, 2011
The Coregasm Workout, Dr Debby Herbenick, 2015
Your Wellbeing Blueprint, Michelle McQuaid & Dr Peggy Lee Kern
The Fourth Trimester, Kimberly Ann Johnson, 2017
How to Not Hate Your Husband After Kids, Jancee Dunn, 2018
The Postnatal Depletion Cure, Dr Oscar Serrallach, 2018
The Wife Drought, Annabel Crabb, 2015
Beyond The Birth Plan, Rhea Dempsey,

Training

Jenny Burrell Education for training on PostPartum Wellbeing, Exercise and Core Restore.
Neuroscience Academy for training on the Biopsychosocial model of health.
Integrative Women's Health Institute
Wellness Coaching Australia

Websites

Continence.org.au
PelvicFloorFirst.com.au
Panda.org.au (Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia)

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Prevalence of and risk factors associated with sexual health issues in primiparous women at 6 and 12 months postpartum; -

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<https://www.healthline.com/health/parenting/the-french-know-whats-up-down-there#Parlez-vous-pelvic-floor-health?>

<https://www.bristolmassagetherapy.co.uk/tips-articles/massaging-a-c-section-scar#:~:text=Initially%2C%20massage%20regularly%20until%20your,or%20even%20once%20a%20month.>

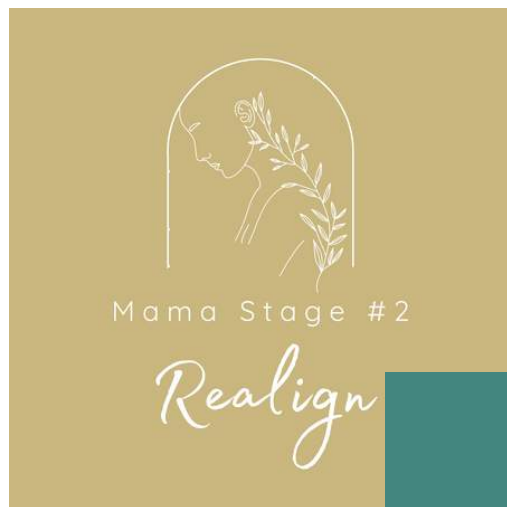
<https://lovemajka.com/blogs/blog/postpartum-and-magnesium-benefits>



BOOK A MAMA MOVEMENT ASSESSMENT

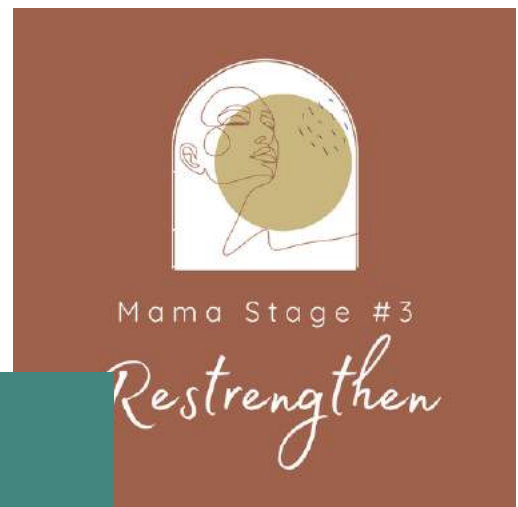
[BOOK NOW](#)

MORE WORKOUTS AVAILABLE ON MAGIC MAMA



Mama Stage #2
Realign

This block features a gold background. At the top is a white line-art illustration of a woman's profile in a yoga pose, holding a leafy branch. Below the illustration, the text "Mama Stage #2" is written in a simple sans-serif font, and "Realign" is written in a white cursive font.



Mama Stage #3
Restrengthen

This block features a dark red background. At the top is a white line-art illustration of a woman's profile with a green circular element on her face. Below the illustration, the text "Mama Stage #3" is written in a simple sans-serif font, and "Restrengthen" is written in a white cursive font.



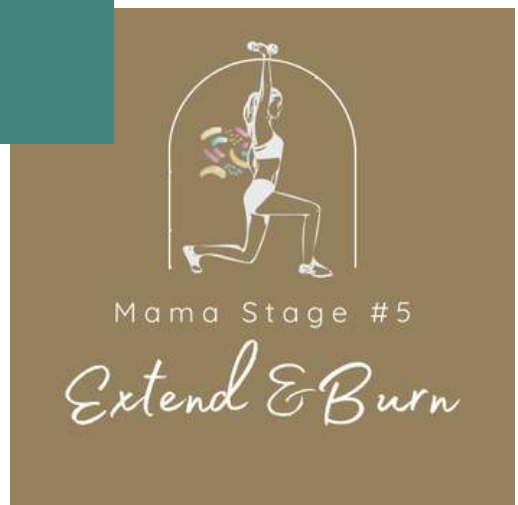
Mama Stage #1
Restore

This block features a teal background. At the top is a white line-art illustration of a woman holding a baby. Below the illustration, the text "Mama Stage #1" is written in a simple sans-serif font, and "Restore" is written in a white cursive font.



Mama Stage #4
Extend

This block features a dark green background. At the top is a white line-art illustration of a woman in a yoga pose with a large white circle behind her. Below the illustration, the text "Mama Stage #4" is written in a simple sans-serif font, and "Extend" is written in a white cursive font.



Mama Stage #5
Extend & Burn

This block features a brown background. At the top is a white line-art illustration of a woman in a yoga pose with a colorful circular element. Below the illustration, the text "Mama Stage #5" is written in a simple sans-serif font, and "Extend & Burn" is written in a white cursive font.

JOIN THE MAGIC MAMA COMMUNITY

**No matter what stage of your post partum journey.
No matter where you are in the world you can have my professional
teaching.**

Whether you want baby to be in the room with you - taking a moment to exercise together or finding some time for yourself. This exercise library can travel with you - from the bathroom, to the bedroom, to the beach or park. It also journeys with you as you progress from infant to bub - from weeks to months with workouts to meet you where you are at on the continuum. Let's face it, phone workouts will always be possible at nap time!



GET MY VIDEO EXERCISE LIBRARY & DIRECT ACCESS TO ME AND MY MINI-COURSES

Magic Mama On-line provides videos on all the stages of PostPartum Restoration. From recovery to restrengthening.
COMING SOON! CONTACT ME TO FIND OUT MORE.



WHAT YOU GET:

- Self-checks
- Exercise for each stage
- Guided Pelvic Floor Exs
- Anatomy for safe recovery
- Mini-courses for wellbeing like Time-management for Mamas, Simple Self-care