

## TUMMY MUSCLES AFTER BIRTH

**I had my first baby last week, and was shocked that my tummy was so wobbly after it. What can I do to help my tummy muscles recover?**

Don't worry, this is totally normal. Your abdominal muscles were stretching over your growing bump for nine months, so expect it to take time for the muscles to settle back to their original state again. Ask your Chartered Physiotherapist for some fitted tubigrip and wear it over your abdominals daily for the first six weeks. The compression from the tubigrip helps reduce abdominal swelling, moves stagnant lymph out of the area, and stabilises the skin to help it shrink again. For mums who have a C section, the compression is great for

supporting your healing wound. Massaging your abdominal muscles helps improve your circulation and flushes out the area. If you had a C section, you will not be able to massage around the wound until the scar has fully healed. Once the scar is well healed (approximately 9-12 weeks after the birth), it is beneficial to gently massage over the scar to make the tighter tissue more supple. This should be continued until the scar feels painfree to the touch and without tightness (which could take a few months). Visit your Chartered Physiotherapist for some gently abdominal strengthening exercises



that will help tighten the muscles again, and avoid sit ups as they put too much pressure on your tummy in the early stages.

## THIRD TRIMESTER SLEEPING

**I am eight months' pregnant and finding it really uncomfortable to sleep. Any tips?**

Pregnancy at this late stage can be uncomfortable, and your bed might not be the relaxing haven it used to be. Later in pregnancy, lying on your side is really the only available position to sleep in. Support your bump with a pillow underneath so you don't have tension across the sides of your bump and lower ribcage. Place a long pillow between your knees to keep your pelvis and lower back as balanced as possible. Some women may prefer to give up the bed entirely, and instead sleep in a reclining chair. When getting out of bed use the



following trick to keep your spine and pelvis balanced: when lying on your side, let your two feet fall together over the edge of the bed and push yourself up

at the same time with the underneath elbow. This keeps your back straight and supported, and avoids straining through your bump.



*Jenny Branigan is a chartered physiotherapist and partner at Total Physio in Sandyford, Co Dublin, and sees many women during and after pregnancy, treating issues like pelvic girdle pain. She is also mum to Jamie and Holly. Jenny runs pregnancy pilates courses through Total Physio. For more information see [www.totalphysio.ie](http://www.totalphysio.ie)*

These answers are not a substitute for a full assessment by your chartered physiotherapist. If you are suffering with any pain or injury, please contact your local chartered physiotherapist who specialises in treating pregnant and postnatal women. It is vital to deal promptly with these aches and pains and they will only get worse as your bump and baby get bigger and heavier.