

## ASK THE PHYSIOTHERAPIST

Q

*Jogging after birth*

**My baby was born five weeks ago. I was feeling great and eager to shift some of the pregnancy excess, so I tried to jog a few times last week. I had to stop because I just felt so exhausted afterwards. Is this normal?**

The main thing to bear in mind is that you shouldn't push yourself if you are not feeling up to it. Many women feel great pressure to bounce back to their pre-pregnancy weight and often overdo it, especially if they are very tired from sleepless nights.

- If you feel notice any of the following symptoms when you start to exercise again, please stop immediately:
- Increased bleeding again or if it starts again after it had stopped
- Abdominal pain
- Mastitis (contact your GP with this one)
- Fainting, dizzy spells or severe headaches (contact your GP with this one)
- Increased fatigue
- Muscle aches and pains

You are still in the early postnatal stage, so it is really important to look after yourself well and make sure your recovery is a priority.

You were right to stop as it sounds like you just weren't ready yet to start exercising. Don't overexert yourself.

Remember that it may take you months to return to your pre-pregnancy shape and weight, so don't be discouraged by slow progress.



Q

*Feet swelling and aches*

**I just had my first baby two weeks ago. In the last few weeks of pregnancy, my feet swelled up A LOT. It even became uncomfortable to walk. Now that my baby is here, the swelling has gone down again, but I notice aching in the arches of my feet and it's stopping me from getting out walking as much as I would like. Help!**

You should see your chartered physiotherapist as soon as possible to get this assessed. There are a few things to consider with this type of pain. The alignment of your feet and legs could be putting a lot of pressure on the medial arches and you may need some insoles or orthotic correction to take the pressure off, especially if you have flat feet. There may be a trapped nerve causing your pain, although this is less likely if it is in both feet and without pins and needles. It is important to diagnose and treat this as soon as possible, so your postnatal exercise won't cause any damage or increased pain.



THESE ANSWERS ARE NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR A PROPER ASSESSMENT BY YOUR CHARTERED PHYSIOTHERAPIST. IT IS VITAL TO DEAL PROMPTLY WITH ANY ACES AND PAINS AND THEY WILL ONLY GET WORSE AS YOUR BABY GETS BIGGER AND HEAVIER.

Q

*Rib pain in third trimester*

Rib pain can be very uncomfortable and can increase until your baby starts to drop in the later stages of your third trimester. Your ribcage expands as your pregnancy progresses to make room for your growing baby and to maintain your lung capacity. This expansion puts pressure on the ribs causing pain. It can be further compounded if your baby likes to kick into the already aching area.

Try these tips to help rib pain:

- Practice deep breathing exercises while sitting comfortably – inhale deeply through the nose, hold it for three seconds and exhale out of the mouth. Repeat five times every few hours.
- Give them a stretch by getting onto your hands and knees and rolling your hips towards your right heel and then towards your left heel in a circular motion. Do five circles slowly in each direction. Discontinue if your wrists get sore in this position.
- Lying down to rest on the opposite side to the painful ribs with a cushioned support under your bump can help ease the pain by taking all the weight off the area. Try to do this after a long day at work or a car journey.



## QUICK GUIDE

1

**How to ...  
STRENGTHEN  
YOUR PELVIC  
FLOOR**

Strengthening your pelvic floor muscles will help you to support your bladder and bowel and reduce the accidental leaking from your bladder. To identify your pelvic floor muscles, stop urination in midstream. Squeeze in and relax the muscles around the vagina and your back passage. If you have mastered the art of contracting your pelvic floor muscles correctly, you can try holding the inward squeeze for longer (up to 10 seconds) before relaxing. Make sure you can breathe easily while you squeeze.

2

**Importance  
of...  
GOOD POSTURE  
DURING  
PREGNANCY**

Good posture during pregnancy involves training your body to stand, walk, sit, and lie in positions where the least amount of strain is placed on your back. It is crucial from the start that you try to develop and maintain good posture, as it is beneficial for both you and your baby. Some key benefits: It will give your baby more room to grow and develop. It reduces lower back, shoulder, neck and pelvic pain. It increases recovery post birth.

3

**Tip ...  
SWIMMING  
DURING  
PREGNANCY**

Swimming is great exercise because it uses both large muscle groups. It's a low-impact activity but it also provides good cardiovascular benefits and allows expectant women to feel weightless despite the extra pounds added by pregnancy. Swimming also improves circulation, increases muscle tone and strength, and builds endurance. If you didn't swim or exercise at all before pregnancy, it should be okay for you to swim, but check

