

## ASK THE PHYSIOTHERAPIST

Q

*Recovery after C section*

**I am booked in for a Caesarean section in a few weeks. My physio has told me I will need to see her afterwards for some recovery exercises.**

**What should I expect?**

Be guided by your physio on when to start these; this will depend on how quickly you recover after the C-section. Deep breathing exercises should be done as soon as possible after the C-section, and frequently. Inhale deeply (into the sides and backs of the ribs), hold that breath in for three seconds and gently exhale. Do five every hour. Ankle rotations and gentle ankle bending movements can be done immediately while still recovering in bed. Practice for 30 seconds every hour. As soon as you are able, get out of bed and walk slowly around your hospital room (with help if you need it), trying to stand straight. You can support your wound with a pillow firmly pressed against it. Begin pelvic tilting in bed or when sitting as soon as you feel able. This works your abdominal muscles without stressing your spine. Once you are at home you can practice walking around the house, and going up and down the stairs as soon as you are able. Get outside for short but frequent walks as much as you can and gradually build up your tolerance. Do not begin any classes, such as Pilates or aerobics, until at least 10 weeks after the C-section or until your obstetrician has given you the all clear.

Q

*Upper back pain*

**I am 30 weeks pregnant and working at a desk full time. Recently I have noticed that my upper back gets very sore when I sit for long periods.**

**Should I see a physio or is this just part of being pregnant?**

The upper back (thoracic spine) is a common area of pain during pregnancy and should be promptly treated. The upper spine supports the weight of your growing breasts and has to accommodate for postural changes due to your changing breast and bump sizes. These postural changes can cause the upper spine to become stiff and sore and may even result in pain when you cough or take a deep breath. Luckily this area is very straightforward to treat. Your Chartered Physiotherapist can treat you lying on your side or in a sitting position to ease out those stiff joints and tight muscles. Taping can be very beneficial for postural re-education and reducing pain. You will also be given some safe and simple postural strengthening exercises that you can do to fully resolve your symptoms.



Q

*C section scar tightness*

**I had a C-section two months ago and my scar is feeling quite tight when I move. Will this just loosen out with time or so I have a problem with it?**

**What can I do to help?**

Scar tissue is tighter than normal tissue and can pull (sometimes painfully) when you move into positions that stretch it. Once the scar is well healed (approximately 9-12 weeks after the birth), it is beneficial to gently massage the scar to make it supple again. This should be continued until the scar feels pain free to touch and is no longer tight (which could take several months).

Massaging your abdominal muscles is also great for improving your circulation. This has the effect of flushing out all the toxins and excess fluid in the area. Use scar oil for decreasing the colour of scars daily after your bath or shower and you will soon notice the difference. This advice applies to any scar, not just a section scar.



## QUICK GUIDE

1

**How to...  
HELP CARPEL  
TUNNEL  
SYNDROME**

Carpel Tunnel can be a painful complaint in late pregnancy. Try these tips:

- ✱ Avoid forceful, repetitive hand movements.
- ✱ Check your office work station via an ergonomic assessment. Make sure your wrists are not flexed as you type by adjusting the height of your chair.
- ✱ Take frequent breaks from computer work and stretch your hands.
- ✱ Avoid sleeping on your hands or sleeping with your wrists bent.

2

**Can I....  
CONTINUE  
WEIGHT-  
TRAINING WHEN  
PREGNANT?**

If you are used to lifting weights, then it's fine to continue when you're pregnant but with some moderations, such as not pushing yourself too much (now is not the time to start increasing your weights), and avoiding exercises above the head. It's a good idea to book in with a trainer to see if there's anything you should avoid and if your technique is good. Finally, always check with your midwife or obstetrician first.

3

**Tip...  
WALKING  
POST-BIRTH**

Walking is an excellent exercise to begin with when you are recovering from the birth. Begin with walking around the house, and then short distances as your energy returns. Avoid walking for fitness until you have been cleared by your doctor, especially if you have had a C section (wait at least six weeks). Build up any exercise slowly, increasing it each session and letting your body guide you.