I'm not a bot



```
The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) says it's okay to gradually start exercising as soon as you get the go-ahead from your OB or midwife, and as long as you feel up to it. Your healthcare provider may want you to wait until they see you at your first postpartum checkup to see how you're doing first. If you exercised
throughout your pregnancy and had a vaginal delivery without complications, you can safely do light exercise - walks around the neighborhood, modified push-ups, and stretching - within days of giving birth as long as you're not in any pain. If you weren't active during your pregnancy, or tapered off your fitness routine as the weeks went on, it's best
to check with your OB or midwife before you begin exercising again. Talk to your healthcare provider first before starting to exercise after a c-section incision takes at least several weeks to heal, and it may be some time after that before you
really feel like working out. However, walking at an easy pace is encouraged because it promotes healing and helps prevent blood clots and other complications. Once you've received the green light from your provider, you're not only free to start moving again, but research on postpartum exercise's many benefits encourages it. You can start with
postpartum pelvic floor exercises, which will help you regain bladder control and heal a damaged or weakened pelvic floor. Ab-strengthening your abdominal wall can lessen any separation of those muscles (known as diastasis recti) during pregnancy. Regular postpartum
aerobic exercise is not only safe, but it will improve your overall health and fitness without negatively impacting your breastmilk production or your baby's growth. It can also be a boon to your mood and mental health - studies have shown that exercise can help stave off postpartum depression. Just make sure to take it slow at first, be gentle with
yourself, and drink plenty of water as you return to your exercise routine or start a new one. What are the guidelines for postpartum exercise per day. But you can start small with 10 minutes of a low-impact aerobic
activity, such as walking. As you regain strength, you can increase the length or number of your walks and start working in other aerobic activity. Take it slowly for your first six weeks postpartum, and stay at a workout intensity at which you can maintain a conversation but not belt out a song. Try to build up to walking three to five times a week for
30 minutes at this exertion level. Some other recommendations for postpartum exercises (like Kegels) and other workouts to strengthen your core. These will help build up the muscles near your uterus, bladder, and small intestine so you can
regain bladder control - and the freedom to laugh without worrying about postpartum incontinence. If you need extra guidance, ask your provider to refer you to a pelvic floor physical therapist. Join an exercise class for new moms. Try to find one taught by a postpartum exercise specialist. Many YMCAs, recreation centers, gyms, and yoga studios
offer in-person (and sometimes virtual) exercise classes for new moms. Popular online programs, like Peloton and Daily Burn, have dedicated postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can't find a postpartum workouts you can stream from your house. If you can stream from your house is not you can stream from your house. If you can stream from your house is not you can stream from you can stream from your house is not you can stream from you ca
having a baby aren't for focusing on postpartum weight loss - they're for bonding with your exciting (and yes, overwhelming!) new role as a parent. Starting a diet too soon after giving birth can not only hamper your mood and energy level, but also diminish your milk supply if you're breastfeeding. Give yourself time and
grace. Exercise is good for you, but listen to your body and don't overdo it for the first few months after giving birth. Your body just produced a tiny new human, and it needs time to heal - and sleep. There's no rush or suggested timeline for returning to your pre-baby fitness level. What are some great postpartum workout plans for new moms? Dive
in with basic workouts that strengthen your abdominal muscles, pelvic muscles, and upper body. Kegels are the easiest place to start, and will improve circulation to your pelvic floor and prevent incontinence. To start, lie on your back with your knees bent and tighten the muscles of your vagina. Begin by getting a feel for contracting your pelvic floor
muscles - the muscles you squeeze to stop the flow of urine. Focus on isolating those muscles and avoid squeezing your thighs or buttocks as you contract. Once you have a feel for pelvic floor muscle contractions, start with two types of exercises: The first is a short contract and relax motion, called "quick flicks" - build up to 10-20 repetitions of
those. The second is a slow, increasingly strong contraction that you hold and relax for several seconds - think of your pelvic floor muscles contracting the same way an elevator slowly goes up and down. Over time, work up to three to four sets of Kegels for up to three times a day. Add push-ups to work your arms, back, and core muscles. Start on all
fours and lower yourself down as far as you can, with your absc engaged. Repeat this 10 to 12 times, and work up to three sets. These will help you avoid back pain and build strength for baby-wearing and -carrying. If you prefer planks, you can substitute those and try to hold the position for 30 seconds to a minute. Include two light
exercises for strengthening your abs - head and shoulder raises, and the pelvic tilt, or bridge. To do both, start by lying on your back with your knees bent. Head and shoulder raises are essentially slow, controlled crunches; pelvic tilts involve lifting your tailbone and holding for a few seconds before releasing. Repeat both eight to 10 times - these
moves will also help lower the risk of back pain. Find a postpartum yoga class to ease yourself into a low-intensity yoga flow. Not only will a new yoga practice help restore your energy and lower your blood pressure, but research shows yoga decreases postpartum depression and anxiety. Taking a class will also connect you with other new moms -
which can be a lifeline during the often-isolating newborn period. If you can't make it to a class, try streaming a postpartum yoga workout at home. Once you feel ready, you can work up to more low-impact exercises like swimming, biking, and lifting weights. For higher-impact exercise such as running, experts recommend waiting at least 12 weeks
after birth. However, if you were an elite or competitive athlete before and during pregnancy, you'll likely be able to return to high-intensity training more quickly than others; just be sure to drink plenty of water and eat enough calories to support your activity level. When is it safe to start a postpartum ab workout? If you've had a vaginal delivery,
it's safe to start light abdominal exercises within days of giving birth. (Moms who are recovering from a c-section may need to wait at least a few weeks longer, as you're recovering from a major abdominal surgery.) Note that "light" is the key word here. Take it easy on your abdominal muscles and don't do any traditional sit-ups or crunches for the
first several months after delivery - these put too much stress on those muscles and aren't effective for rebuilding abdominal strength. Instead, ask your healthcare provider (or a fitness instructor with expertise in prenatal or postpartum ab workout should
minimize stress on your lower back and midline (the center of the abdomen running vertically from your sternum to your pelvis). Many women develop a gap between their abdominal muscles as their belly expands during pregnancy and labor, a condition called diastasis recti. The gap may or may not fully close after delivery, but in most cases, it
doesn't cause any short- or long-term problems. Even light postpartum abdominal exercises can help decrease the distance of this gap. A note about abdominal binders (also known as belly wraps): Some women say that belly wraps helped them get their figures back faster, but fitness experts often warn against them. Binding just reduces the work of
your core muscles instead of pushing those muscles to grow stronger. Are there any concerns about exercise and breastfeeding? No, there's no reason to worry that exercise will impact your breastfeeding? No, there's no reason to worry that exercise will impact your breastfeeding or milk supply. As long as you drink plenty of water - and maintain a healthy breastfeeding diet that accounts for the extra 450 to 500 daily
calories your body needs when nursing - even vigorous exercise won't significantly affect the supply or composition of your breasts sore or tender. Wear a supportive sports bra while working out, and try to nurse your baby before you exercise so your breasts won't feel
uncomfortably full. If your breasts feel sore during workouts, try wearing two fitness bras for extra support. What are the signs that I may need to slow down on the postpartum exercise? Too much physical activity during the first few weeks after delivery can cause any of the signs below. Call your OB or midwife if: Your vaginal discharge (lochia)
becomes redder and starts to flow more heavily. Bleeding restarts after you thought it had stopped. You experience any pain during exercise, whether it's joint, muscles feel sore for an unusually long time after a workout, affecting
your ability to support your body as you move. Your muscles may also feel shaky when in use. Your morning resting heart rate is elevated by more than 10 beats per minute above your usual heart rate. Consider checking your morning resting heart rate is elevated by more than 10 beats per minute above your general health. When it's elevated over
your normal rate, it's a sign you're doing too much and need more rest. Read more: How to find time to work out as a new mom How to cope with postpartum foods for new moms After giving birth, getting your post-baby body into a postpartum workout routine can
seem daunting. Even if you have the desire, it's hard to know where to start or what's safe to do. There are a number of factors at play when it comes to postpartum exercise, including the type of birth you had and your lifestyle before and during pregnancy. "The most important thing to remember is that every woman's recovery is different and that
she should talk with her physician before starting any exercise program," says Dr. Lindsey Longerot, an OB-GYN at The Women's Specialists of Houston at Texas Children's Pavilion for Women. Medical and fitness experts agree that women need to listen to their recovering bodies and ease back into exercise as they feel ready, but generally, the
standard advice for how soon can you begin to exercise after birth — lightly! — is about a week (think walks with baby). That being said, there's no one size fits all rule. According to Burr Leonard, fitness expert and creator of The Bar Method, if you were active prior to and during your pregnancy, chances are you will be able to slide into a postpartum
workout routine sooner than the standard six weeks. However, Leonard cautions women to be mindful of how their bodies change during pregnancy, noting that because "ligaments and lower back muscles are fragile for several months after childbirth," women should avoid intense stretches that could overextend their ligaments during this stage.
Rest as much as possible during that first week after your baby is born, says birth advocate and trainer Rachel Nicks, who is also a certified doula. She suggests using this week-by-week postpartum exercise program as a quide: Rest! "Light walking is a great activity to do with your new baby. Go slow and do short distances at first as you begin to
regain strength," says Nicks, adding that it's good for mom and baby to try to get outside, as well. Kegel exercises are also a great exercises to begin with, she notes. Try doing kegels, holding that it's good for mom and baby to try to get outside, as well. Kegel exercises are also a great exercises to begin with, she notes. Try doing kegels, holding that it's good for mom and baby to try to get outside, as well. Kegel exercises are also a great exercises are also a great exercises.
this week and into Week #4. In an all-fours or kneeling position, engage and hold your muscles for five, 10 and then 20 seconds, building gradually. Release, relax and then repeat. At around the 5 minute mark in the
video above, you can see how to activate your deep core muscles (transverse abdominis). "Keep in mind that you were pregnant for 40 weeks! Be patient with your postpartum body," advises Nicks. At this point in your postpartum to 40 weeks! Be patient with your postpartum body," advises Nicks. At this point in your postpartum body," advises Nicks. At this point in your postpartum body, "advises Nicks."
Avoid high-impact workouts until you feel that you have regained your pelvic floor for almost a year and then passed through it. Give your pelvic floor lots of attention." Nicks calls this week a milestone week. "Please get clearance from your gynecologist that it is
safe to begin exercising. It's best to only begin a more steady exercises at this point: Try cow pose or seated or standing reverse prayer pose. Try pushups, triceps work, shoulder and chest presses and reverse
flys. "When deciding on an appropriate exercise plan, I caution patients to start slowly," stresses Longerot. "Many of their workouts during pregnancy. Therefore, they should not attempt to start at the level at which they were
exercising prior to pregnancy." Try walking — a great, low-impact exercise and a way for both mother and baby to get out of the house and enjoy being outdoors. Yoga and Pilates are other great options. For more ideas, try these 15 Post-Pregnancy Workouts. *Originally written by Shannon Moyer-Szemenyei. Have you just given birth and are now
anxious to start exercising again? I get it, that's exactly how I felt after having my first. I wanted to minimize the time it took to get back in shape, feel stronger (especially in my core), and just move my body after I just shed that bowling ball that was weighing me down! The problem was, I knew my body had just done the equivalent of running a
marathon - seriously, why does labor have to be so long?! 🕮 I knew I needed to take it slow and I wanted to be strategic about the movements I was doing to help my body heal. So, I'm sharing the best gentle exercises you can do as early as one week postpartum that will help strengthen your core and get you moving after birth. These can (and
should) be done whether you had a vaginal or c-section delivery to support healing and prepare your body for a more intense post-pregnancy exercise routine down the road. Absolutely, you can exercise one week postpartum. It's great that you're prioritizing staying active after giving birth. While it's important to give your body time to rest and
recover, gentle exercise that incorporates belly exercises can actually be beneficial during the postpartum period. Walking, stretching, and gentle yoga can be good options to start with. If you had a difficult delivery or complications, it's a good
idea to check with your healthcare provider before starting any exercise routine. However, the exercises I provide in this article are very gentle and allow you to heal your pelvic floor muscles after birth. I started using these movements within a week after each of my three births (all vaginal deliveries with no complications) and found myself feeling
more in tune with my core and pelvic floor without feeling exhausted from exercise one week after giving birth utilizing low-impact, gentle movements you can expect a smoother recovery, lower risk of postpartum. The most important reasons to start low-impact exercise after birth
include: Promotes healing: Low-impact exercise can help promote healing after childbirth by increasing blood flow to the affected areas, reducing swelling, and easing muscle tension. This can help promote healing process and reduce stress and anxiety: Exercise has been shown to be an effective way to reduce stress and
anxiety. This is especially important for new mothers, who may be dealing with a range of emotions and challenges as they adjust to their new mothers who may be dealing with sleep deprivation. Improves overall fitness: Even low-impact
exercise can help improve overall fitness levels by strengthening muscles and increasing cardiovascular endurance. This can be especially helpful for new mothers who are looking to lose baby weight after giving birth.
While weight loss should not be the main focus in the postpartum period, exercise can be a healthy weight over time. If you are excited to start exercises one week postpartum, these are the best ones to start with. These movements can be done in as little as 10 minutes each day, starting with 2-3
times per week and increasing as your strength comes back. I did each of these movements early on after giving birth to all three of my kids and my strength came back quicker than I anticipated and my mood improved immensely. Taking the time to focus on something for yourself after having a baby will always make you feel better and more like
yourself in this time of transition. Walking is the perfect way to exercise after birth. Whether it's walking around your house, getting outside in the fresh air, or hopping on the treadmill, walking will promote good blood flow, improve your posture, and recruit your abdominals to begin the healing process. Start with a ten-minute walk and look out for
signs of exhaustion, discomfort, or excess bleeding. If you see any of these signs, slow down and try again in a few days. Typically, a ten-minute walk on a level surface will be attainable after one week postpartum. Begin lying on your mat with your knees bent, and your pelvis tucked, ensuring your back is flat on the floor. Put your index and middle
fingers just inside your hip bones to feel for the activation of your transverse abdominals. Inhale through your stomach towards your spine and lifting your pelvic floor up and in. Audibly make a shh or hiss sound to help expel all the air
and activate your pelvic floor. Repeat for 10 breaths or 2 minutes. Start lying on your back in a neutral position with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Inhale in this position relaxing your pelvic floor up and in while pushing your pelvis
toward the ceiling. Your pelvis will point upwards toward 12 o'clock. Continue to repeat this motion with each breath for 2 minutes. Begin lying on your back with your knees bent 90°. Pull your belly button toward your spine to brace your core and breathe normally. You can place your hands on your hips, pointing upwards to ensure they are not
rotating during the movement. Slowly lift one leg in the air, keeping the knees bent, stopping when your leg back down and repeat on the other side. Repeat this for 20 alternating repetitions, 10 on each leg. Gentle exercises that target your abdominal muscles can be a safe and effective way to support
postpartum recovery just one week after giving birth. Low-impact exercises can help promote healing, reduce stress and anxiety, boost energy levels, improve overall fitness, and support healthy weight loss over time. By prioritizing self-care and incorporating gentle exercises into your routine, you are taking an important step toward rebuilding your
physical and emotional health after childbirth. Did you start exercising one week postpartum? Let me know in the comments. You've completed the marathon of growing, carrying, and birthing a tiny human. It's no easy feat. After an initial period of resting (as much as you can) and soaking up the magic of newborn life, you may be itching to start
moving your body again. But when is it safe to work out, and where do you even begin? In this article, I break it all down for you, helping you safely navigate returning to exercise postpartum. But first a bit about me: I'm a former dancer and certified pre/postnatal exercise specialist, and I learned first-hand when my two littles were born that
pregnancy and childbirth are the two biggest events your body can go through. The physical transformation is huge (thank goodness for Ingrid+Isabel's super stretchy activewear!), but the emotional change is something no one prepares you for. You're going through a major identity shift as you enter into motherhood so returning to something
familiar and invigorating like exercise has more benefits than you know. Whether you birthed your baby vaginally or via C-section, it's important to remember that your body has gone through a physical trauma, and for some women, major abdominal surgery. The initial weeks post-birth are a critical time for you to rest, heal, nourish, and restore your
body as you bond with your baby. The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology recommends new mothers resume normal physical activity and exercise 6 weeks after vaginal delivery and 8 weeks post C-section. However, you probably won't feel ready to get back to your pre-pregnancy routine without giving your pelvic floor and deep core
muscles some love first. The good news? You can start with some gentle exercises to reclaim some strength earlier than 6-8 weeks. In fact, the sooner you start the better. So grab yourself a supportive legging... here's my week-by-week postpartum workout plan to help you heal. During those first few weeks postpartum, minimum physical exertion is
advised. You're probably still bleeding as your uterus contracts down to its pre-pregnancy size, and the internal wound on the uterine wall left behind by the placenta starts to repair. During this period, I recommend gentle walks that you can gradually increase in length as you start feeling better. Not only does this help improve circulation, getting
outside can do wonders for an exhausted Mama's mental health... I know it did for me!During this time, you can also begin to safely stimulate the deep core muscles with a simple breathing technique called "360 breathing." When performed correctly, it's the best abdominal exercise you can do for your body right now—and it's just breathing! Gentle
enough to be performed in the days immediately following birth, it simulates the body's relaxation response and helps slowly build your mind-muscle connection. Here's how to do it... Lay on your back with knees bent and feet hips width on the floor. Bring your hands to rest on the front of your ribcage. Inhale and drop one knee out to the side,
keeping both hip bones pointing up towards the sky. Exhale, engage the pelvic floor and deep core and bring the knee back to its original position. As you perform this exercise, you want to make sure the supporting knee stays stable. Repeat 6-8x on each side. Image Source: Peri Hughes, Pre and Postnatal Exercise Expert Before we get into the next
series of exercises, it's important to note that these are rehabilitative (think: physical therapy after undergoing knee surgery). We need to re-engage the pelvic floor and deep core before we can safely work out again. So once you've mastered your 360 breathing, the next step is to begin layering in exercises that will begin strengthening the core
muscles from the inside out. These exercises will also help heal diastasis recti, which you probably know as ab separation will heal on its own.
However, most women will need to perform some postpartum rehabilitative exercises to help close the gap and restore the tissue underneath. Here are some tried-and-true ones I swear by... This exercise is great for bringing awareness and connection back to the pelvic floor. Start in an all 4's position with hands under shoulders, knees under hips,
and a small pilates ball or cushion between your thighs. Inhale into the ribcage and the belly in preparation for movement. On the exhale, begin squeezing the ball/cushion, drawing your pelvic floor muscles up towards your naval, and wrapping your deep core muscles in towards your spine. While you exhale, gently tilt your hip bones up towards your
ribcage, elongating your lower back and bringing your pelvis into an posterior pelvic tilt. Inhale, return your pelvis to neutral, and release the contraction of your inner core and pelvic floor. Repeat up to 8x. Tempo should be slow and in coordination with your breath. Image Source: Peri Hughes, Pre and Postnatal Exercise ExpertLay on your back
supporting knee stays stable. Repeat 6-8x on each side. Image Source: Peri Hughes, Pre and Postnatal Exercise ExpertThis exercise starts to layer in glute activation. Lay on your back with legs bent and feet hips width apart on the floor. Place a small pilates ball or cushion between the inner thighs. Inhale, breathe into the rib cage and belly. Exhale
and begin to squeeze the ball/cushion, lift the pelvic floor towards the naval, and wrap your inner core muscles towards your spine as you start to roll your pelvis off the mat and into a bridge position. Keep your shoulder blades cemented to the mat. Inhale and roll all the way down to the floor, releasing your core and pelvic floor at the bottom. Repeat
8-12x. Image Source: Peri Hughes, Pre and Postnatal Exercise Expert This exercise Expert This exercise Expert This exercise Expert This exercise starts to layer in glute activation. Lay on your back with legs bent and feet hips width apart on the floor. Place a small pilates ball or cushion between the inner thighs. Inhale, breathe into the rib cage and belly. Exhale and begin to squeeze the ball/cushion, lift the
pelvic floor towards the naval, and wrap your inner core muscles towards your spine as you start to roll your pelvis off the mat and into a bridge position. Keep your shoulder blades cemented to the mat. Inhale and roll all the way down to the floor, releasing your core and pelvic floor at the bottom. Repeat 8-12x. Image Source: Peri Hughes, Pre and
Postnatal Exercise ExpertRebuilding your deep core muscles really is the foundation of a successful postnatal workout program. When you can successfully activate these muscles again, it doesn't just help build strength. It has a positive impact on your day-to-day by improving posture, protecting your low back, and providing stability to the pelvis and
spine. Almost immediately post-birth, you will be bending over to pick up your baby. This means loading up the core and pelvic floor right away when it's at its weakest. A newborn in a car seat can easily weigh close to 12-15lb! The more we can train our bodies to exhale and engage our deep core through exertion, the more we can help protect our
pelvic floor and reduce the risk of postpartum injury. Of course, the goal with any postpartum program is to eventually progress out of the rehabilitative phase, challenge the core in new ways, and build overall strength. This is great news if you want to pick up running again or get back to that pilates class you love. But even better, it will help
prepare your body for the physical demands of motherhood like carrying or chasing after a toddler... they say it's an extreme sport for a reason. Begin in an all 4's position (optional to add a loop resistance band around your thighs). Inhale to prepare for movement. Exhale, lift the pelvic floor and wrap your deep core muscles in towards the spine as
you lift one leg directly out to the side. Keep both hips level and shoulders square to the floor. Inhale to return the knee to its original position under the hip. Repeat 6-8x on each side. The following exercises will feel progressively more challenging than the ones you completed earlier in this program. They'll continue to strengthen your core, in
addition to the muscles that make up the posterior chain—so necessary for breastfeeding moms who often find themselves in a rounded shoulder position. Begin in an all 4's position (optional to add a loop resistance band around your thighs). Inhale to prepare for movement. Exhale, lift the pelvic floor and wrap your deep core muscles in towards the
spine as you lift one leg directly out to the side. Keep both hips level and shoulders square to the floor. Inhale to return the knee to its original position under the hip. Repeat 6-8x on each side. Keep both hips level and shoulders and knees under hips. As you
inhale, extend your opposite arm and leg off the floor and away from the midline. Exhale and engage your core and lift your pelvic floor, bringing the hand in neutral as you move. Repeat 6-8x on each side. Image Source: Peri Hughes, Pre and
Postnatal Exercise Expert Sit on the floor with your legs bent out in front of you. Lean back with your hands on the floor behind your feet and begin lifting your hips off the ground into a reverse tabletop position. Engage your pelvic floor, deep
core, and glutes. Chest stays wide and your gaze is looking up to the ceiling. Inhale to lower your hips back to the floor. Repeat 6-8x. Image Source: Peri Hughes, Pre and Postnatal Exercise Expert As you begin exercising postpartum, your body will give you signs that you're exerting yourself too much and need to back off. This could include an
increase in bleeding, leaking, or even peeing your pants if you do too much before your core and pelvic floor are ready. There's no shame in it—these symptoms are incredibly common, however that does not mean they should be accepted as normal. Pelvic pain, pressure, or leaking when you're running or jumping can be signs of pelvic floor
dysfunction. If you're experiencing any of this discomfort, I recommend consulting a pelvic floor physical therapist, who can build a personalized plan to help to heal your core and strengthen your pelvic floor. There is so much societal pressure to bounce back after baby. This creates unrealistic expectations for new mothers when they are at their
most vulnerable. The truth is it will probably take a lot longer than 6 weeks to feel like yourself again and your body will forever be changed. This doesn't mean you can't get to a place of feeling strong and confident in who you are again—it just takes baby steps. Your body took 9 long months to grow your baby, so give yourself grace and time to heal
as you enter this new chapter. A former dancer, master barre instructor, and certified pre/postnatal exercise specialist. Her experience with her first pregnancy moved her to launch PH Method, an evidence-based workout designed to support women on their journey from fertility to pregnancy moved her to launch PH Method, an evidence-based workout designed to support women on their journey from fertility to pregnancy moved her to launch PH Method, an evidence-based workout designed to support women on their journey from fertility to pregnancy moved her to launch PH Method, an evidence-based workout designed to support women on their journey from fertility to pregnancy moved her to launch PH Method, and pregnancy moved her to launch PH Method PH Method, and pregnancy moved her to launch PH Method PH Meth
classes help women prepare mentally and physically for the changes these big life transitions can bring. You can work out with Peri live in San Francisco or online anytime via her on demand workouts. For more information, visit phmethod.com. You already know that exercise during pregnancy is great for your health — but getting active soon after
you give birth is just as important. Regularly breaking a sweat boosts your energy levels, helps you to sleep better, relieves stress and even potentially staves off postpartum depression (PPD). How much should I exercise after giving birth? Experts at the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommend aiming for at least 150
minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity — i.e. anything that bumps up your heart rate and makes you break a sweat, like brisk walking or bike riding — every week (or 30 minutes a day five days a week), along with two days of strength training (which includes yoga, Pilates and lifting weights). But when is it safe to start exercising again after
giving birth and what postpartum workouts are okay to do? Your very first step should be talking with your practitioner and getting the green light. Ready to get moving? Here are some of your most pressing postpartum exercise questions, answered. How long after childbirth can I start exercising if I had a vaginal birth or a C-section? Experts say all
women can restart Kegel exercises and walk within the first 24 hours of giving birth for 30 minutes daily if they feel up to it — even if you had a C-section or complicated vaginal birth. Several five-minute jaunts count as much as half an hour straight. "For a long time, women were advised to only slowly return to their pre-pregnancy physical activity
after their deliveries," says Raul Artal, M.D., F.A.C.O.G., chairman emeritus of Obstetrics and Gynecology at St. Louis University and the longtime lead author of ACOG's prenatal exercise, pointing out that being sedentary in pregnancy and beyond can pose risks like
blood clots and cardiovascular disease. When you can return to other exercise, however, depends on your birth experience and whether you're experiencing any red-flag symptoms (more on that below). Ultimately, there are no hard-and-fast rules. Just be sure to get the okay from your doctor and listen to your body, advises Carrie Pagliano, DPT, a
physical therapist specializing in women's health in the Washington, D.C. area. If you had a vaginal birth without complications, as long as you aren't experiencing any more serious symptoms you can begin modified pre-pregnancy exercises almost immediately after birth (of course, this doesn't mean you have to, just that if you feel ready and your
practitioner gave you the green light, it's safe to do so). Start with light weights (10 pounds or under), then increase intensity and duration slowly to your comfort level. If you had a vaginal birth with tearing, it can take two to three weeks for extensive (i.e. third- or fourth-degree) tears to heal. In the meantime, talk to your doctor about walking and
upper-body exercises, suggests Artal. If you had a C-section, you should start walking the day after delivery if possible, or as soon as you feel ready (this will boost your circulation, lower your risk of developing a blood clot and help with gas). However, as far as exercise goes, you'll most likely want to wait until at least the six-week mark — you did just
have major surgery, after all. The most important rule: Talk to your practitioner before you start any workout regime and get his or her okay.What are the signs that my body isn't ready to start exercising again?Watch out for warning signs, including:Abdominal painVaginal painVaginal painBleeding (i.e. lochia)Other fluid leakage (i.e. urine or feces)Heaviness in
your pelvic region or the drooping of pelvic floor organs, including the vagina, bladder, rectum or uterus (which could be a sign of pelvic organ prolapse) If you experience any of the above symptoms, stick to walking for now and check in your practitioner. "Your primary care doctor, OB/GYN or midwife knows you the best and can give you the right
recommendation," Pagliano says. Lochia should mostly clear up within the first couple of weeks postpartum — making workouts a lot more feasible since you won't have to wear a bulky pad. What are some specific exercises that are safe to try when I first start exercising postpartum? Once you get the okay from your practitioner to do more than
walking workouts, you can begin stretching and strengthening exercises using light weights or your own bodyweight. Warm up with knee lifts or walking for 10 minutes and cool down for five minutes. Start with very basic abdominal or pelvic tilts, ab curls and build from there. Pagliance tilts or walking for 10 minutes and cool down for five minutes.
also suggests a mommy-and-me class, with a basic level that helps you to find your muscles again. "Over nine months plus delivery, your muscles have changed location, so you need to find them in your new posture and alignment," she says. Are there any exercises I should avoid initially? With all of the stretching and pulling your abs have been
through in the last nine months, you'll definitely want to be extra cautious with ab work at first. Whether or not you've been diagnosed with diastasis recti, watch out for what Pagliano calls doming or bulging in the center of your find yourself
holding your breath or bearing down, that means you're straining — which isn't good for your pelvic floor or abs — so lighten your load or save the exercise for later, when you'le be able to begin high-intensity exercise
varies a lot, but how active you were before and during pregnancy has a big impact on how much exercise you'll be able to tolerate after you give birth. If you weren't a runner, now isn't the time to start training for a half-marathon. But many workout warriors who kept up with exercise during pregnancy and had an uncomplicated vaginal birth are
ready to start with a modified Crossfit, running, cycling or high-intensity interval training (HIIT) program three to four weeks postpartum. Even if you were a Crossfit regular before you conceived but stopped during pregnancy, you can often begin scaling back into workouts within a few weeks of birth, says Pagliano. Just err on the side of caution and
listen to your body — and definitely stop if you experience pain or bleeding. Is there anything I should know about exercising if I'm breastfeed before you work out. "No one wants to run three miles with full breasts," says Pagliano. Another point in favor of a pre
workout feeding sesh: Pagliano says some women notice that their babies have a reaction to their milk right after vigorous exercise because of changes in the makeup of the milk, it can have an impact on the taste. "In the past, there
was hesitation because intense physical activities may cause breast milk to be more [acidic], or lower in pH ... but the quality of your chest will thank you). And drink more fluids (an extra glass before and after your exercise session should do it). What if
exercise is painful, even though it's been at least six weeks after I gave birth? Stop what you're doing immediately, since pain usually indicates a problem that's only likely to get worse if you push, and call your doctor, Artal says. Your practitioner will help you figure out what the problem is and can refer you to a physical therapist if necessary. "In mos
states, you can see a physical therapist without a physician's order, so check the direct access laws in your state," says Pagliano. A PT can evaluate you and either offer exercises to help you heal or reach out to your doctor. As long as your insurance includes physical therapist without a physician's order, so check the direct access laws in your state," says Pagliano. A PT can evaluate you and either offer exercises to help you heal or reach out to your doctor. As long as your insurance includes physical therapist without a physician's order, so check the direct access laws in your state," says Pagliano. A PT can evaluate you and either offer exercises to help you heal or reach out to your doctor. As long as your insurance includes physical therapist without a physician's order, so check the direct access laws in your state, "says Pagliano." A PT can evaluate you and either offer exercises to help you heal or reach out to your doctor. As long as your insurance includes physical therapist without a physician or the physical therapist without a physician or the physical therapist without a physical therapist with a physical therapist with a physical therapist without a physical therapi
the Women's Health section of the American Physical Therapy Association and type in your zip code. What are some signs (pain, bleeding, leakage, pelvic heaviness), stop if you feel lightheaded or dizzy. And watch out changes in your milk
production: A drop-off can indicate you're pushing too hard, too fast. "It's tricky because you have a new body, so you have to figure out what's normal and what's normal or that it should keep you from enjoying your favorite exercises. In fact, it's
perfectly possible to retrain your perineal floor to stop leakage, especially if you check in with an expert early on. How will exercising after having a baby be different? How you'll feel about working out postpartum is super personal. Everyone is different, and how you respond to exercise after giving birth depends on many factors, including any
complications you may have had during labor and delivery. So listen to the signals your body is sending, and if you're super tired, don't feel well or are experiencing pain or leakage, talk to your bre-pregnancy jeans. "That will
get you the outcomes you're looking for," Pagliano says. Can exercise prevent postpartum depression or anxiety? The postpartum depression (PPD). PPD is never your fault, and
there many complex causes of it, but there is evidence that suggests exercise can help lower postpartum anxiety and depression symptoms in most women. "Exercise not only supports your muscles and joints, but it does so much for your biochemistry," Pagliano adds. "It provides a lovely stress outlet for people and is a natural way to help get your
system back into balance. It gets you out with other friends with babies and builds a community to support you."How long before I'll be close to my pre-pregnancy routines, says Artal, although some women find it takes longer. No matter your fitness
level — whether you're a pro athlete or an occasional yogi— be sure to work out only under the guidance of your doctor. Keep in mind that if you were working out regularly before and during pregnancy, you'll be back on track faster than if you skipped the gym for the past nine months (or more). "I've had patients who are able to exercise and run
through pregnancy and pick it back up a couple of weeks later, but I'd say that's not the norm," says Pagliano. After childbirth, some parents itch to get back into a regular exercise routine. But it's not as easy as hopping on the treadmill or rejoining your pre-baby pilates classes. New parents should be realistic and patient when it comes to
postpartum exercise—after all, it took around 40 weeks to grow your pregnant body, and it can take nearly as long to feel like you're somewhat closer to your pre-pregnancy self. Here's what you need to know about postpartum exercise, including how to get started and stay safe. According to the American Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.
(ACOG), you can usually start light walking within a few days of giving birth if you had a normal vaginal delivery. In general, the organization recommends 150 minutes of walking per day. But you will need to work up to this level of movement. Start by taking a five-
and safely for a week or two, build up from there, adding some gentle upper-body stretching or a postpartum exercise class (but get the green light from your health care provider about when it's safe for you to begin
exercising and how much you should do each day. Exercise keeps your body strong, and it protects against some chronic medical conditions, so it stands to reason that you should be exercise can: Strengthen your abdominal musclesPrevent
postpartum depressionPromote better sleepElevate your energyRelieve stressPromote weight management You'll need to wait until your doctor gives you the OK to start postpartum exercise after birth, which might take several weeks (or longer if you had a C-section or labor complications). In the meantime, you can brainstorm a post-pregnancy
workout plan by following the nine important steps outlined here. Jumping back into your workout regimen right after birth is not a great idea, even for ultra-fit people, says Kameelah Phillips, MD, a board-certified OB-GYN. "I would recommend that new moms not try to exert themselves before two weeks. If you are recovering from a C-section, I
would defer a routine until after your first post-operative check." Dr. Phillips also recommend you take ibuprofen prior to any return to activity because the uterus is still healing and can cause discomfort. Give your body a little time to heal
and enjoy a leisurely walk." If you push yourself too hard in the beginning, you can actually be setting yourself back from real recovery. That, of course, does not mean you need to be held hostage in your house for six weeks. A walk can be considered a good start to your road back. Once you embark on some heavier activities, pay attention to signs
from your body. Some people find that bleeding that had tapered down starts to get heavier again, which is a sign that the body needs more time to heal before a postpartum workout plan. It may also be beneficial to talk with a health care provider about your symptoms. They can let you know what's normal and what needs more attention. But most of
all, be patient and allow your body to heal. Recovering from having a baby is a marathon, not a sprint, and you will get there. Weight loss should be the last thing on your mind after childbirth—and that's especially true if you're breastfeeding. Some experts recommend not starting an exercise routine until a couple of weeks postpartum, when your
milk supply is firmly established; talk to your provider for their input. During the first few days after childbirth, some weight will come off gradually as you become more active. If you're nursing, your body needs 500 calories a day more than it
needed before you conceived, so eat enough and eat nutritiously. If the pelvic floor is weak, intra-abdominal pressure (from exercises like crunches, pilates, or general ab work) can put too much strain on the pelvic floor and inhibit healing. It can even lead to organ prolapse in some cases. One of the first forms of postpartum exercise you can start to
incorporate daily can be a kegel routine. Start by strengthening or even re-familiarizing yourself with your pelvic floor exercises—especially if you experienced complications. They can advise you on the best way to strengthen and heal
your pelvic floor. It's very common for postpartum exam. If it's severe enough, you may need to work with a physical therapist to help
draw the muscles back together. So, when easing back to an abdominal postpartum workout, be mindful not to overdo it. Relaxin, the hormone responsible for softening the ligaments and joints during pregnancy and childbirth, can stay in the body for 6 to 12 months after delivery. This can lead to wobbly, unstable joints and a loose pelvis. Again, be
mindful that the postpartum workout you choose is not too jerky in movement. You don't want to cause an injury by doing things too quickly. Instead, ease back into exercises like walking. Swimming is another option that's gentle on the joints and pelvic floor, and great for strengthening the core and back muscles. But you
will need to wait until your bleeding has stopped before adding this exercise to your postpartum workouts, don't discount walking as a gentle cardiovascular exercise. You can add gentle strength training exercises to your routine, too, with
approval from your health care provider. Some people decide to take a postnatal yoga class, designed specifically for people who just had a baby. There also are baby-and-me exercise gand you're more likely to stick with it. Once you ease into postpartum exercise, remember to
hydrate well. If you're out for a stroll with your baby, put your water bottle in the cup holder as a reminder to drink often. Good hydration will need more water. Most experts recommend about 16 cups of water each day for nursing parents. Even
though many new parents hear the old saying "sleep when your baby sleeps," not everyone adheres to these wise words. Incorporating a few moments to simply relax post-workout can really help replenish you. Also, don't try to do too much too soon. Delegate what you can and focus on caring for yourself and your baby during those first few months.
Thanks for your feedback! I've always prided myself on being super in tune with my body and pretty clued up on women's physiology. I'm a qualified personal trainer, health and wellness journalist and former WH editor, and I've worked with hundreds of top-in-class experts for in-depth articles. Overall health, fitness, nutrition, you name it — I've
written about it. I thought I knew pretty much everything there was to know. And if pregnancy was an earth-shaking experience, life postpartum was even more so. InstagramI would regularly strength train pre-pregnancy. One thing
that helped enormously in finding my feet as a new mum was getting back to exercise. Not because I was ashamed of my changing body or wanted to *shudder* bounce back. But I did need to carve out space for a piece of my pre-mum life, for something that bridged the gap between who I was and who I had to be for my daughter. (Those feel-good
endorphins weren't bad either.) This is a look at my postpartum exercise journey — how I started (including my birth story), what helped me along the way, and where I'm at now almost one year on. Brace yourself — it's a ride. My pregnancy Instagram I'd always assumed I'd be one of those super-fit pregnant ladies — swanning around the gym
preceded by a growing belly, dumbbells in hand. Alas, it was not to be.Trimester 1 in bed.I spent much of my pregnancy, especially the first 12 weeks, on the couch. I went from exercising five or six times a week to not being able to manage a single squat. From being a foodie with a cast-iron stomach to not being able to manage a single squat.
able to get down more than (of all things) baked beans on toast. And, hello, lightning crotch, anyone? Trimesters 2 and 3InstagramI followed The Bump Plan by Hollie Grant during pregnancy. Thankfully, by the second trimester, the food aversions were less intense and the nausea had subsided. With clearance from my midwife, I was ready to start
exercising again. While pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise during pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise during pregnancy exercise during pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise during pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even encouraged, during normal pregnancy exercise is perfectly safe, even exercise is perfe
around for a gentle prenatal exercise plan and settled on The Bump Plan by the Pilates PT Hollie Grant. The pregnancy fatigue was still serious, so some weeks I only did one session, but I was pretty happy with that. I did manage the occasional walk too. All things considered, I had a pretty easy pregnancy. I'd been strength training religiously for
about a year beforehand, and there are studies to suggest this may have helped. For example, a study published in the (aptly named) European Journal of Pain found that women who participated in a strength training program before any of
that at all. Research (like this study in the journal of Maternal-Poetal Neonatal Medicine) also suggests that women who participated in regular exercise before pregnancy had a lower risk of C-section. I went into labour with my daughter, Logan, a day before
her due date. I laboured (as planned) at my local hospital for over 12 hours, when Logan's heart rate spiked and doctors became concerned. They strongly advised an emergency C-section, which I agreed to. Logan was born about 15 minutes later, and my world shifted on its axis. My birth recovery Through the ups and downs of pregnancy, it was hard
to come to terms with the fact that I couldn't move my body in the way I loved. I clung to the idea that postpartum would be easier. I'd be able to exercise again. I'd have body autonomy back. (If you're a mum reading this, you're likely smiling wryly, if not outright guffawing, aren't you?) The first two or three weeks after birth were tough. Learning to
care for the tiny human we had brought into the world was a huge learning curve for my husband and me. We barely slept, lived in perpetual fear we were doing something wrong, and seemed to be permanently splattered with poop, breastmilk or both. Of course, I had the added extra fun of C-section recovery to deal with. The midwives in the
hospital had had me walking (read: shuffling gingerly) around the ward the day after my surgery, so by the time we were discharged three days later, I was moving well and found the pain manageable. What shocked me, though, (TMI alert) was the bleeding. Not from my C-section incision, but, er, downstairs. I'd assumed that because I hadn't
delivered vaginally, all those maxi pads I'd been given at my bridal shower wouldn't be necessary. On the contrary, I eventually upgraded to adult nappies (a hospital bag must-have). This continued for several weeks, which is actually pretty normal. 'Even if someone has a C-section they may still experience vaginal bleeding as the placenta detaches
from the uterus and the site of attachment heals,' explains GP Dr Frankie Jackson-Spence. As long as it isn't too heavy, there isn't any reason to be concerned, she adds. 'Your doctor or midwife will counsel you individually on how much bleeding is 'normal' for you. If you notice a change in that it becomes more heavy, you become unwell, experience
severe pain, have a change in vaginal discharge that may indicate infection or something doesn't seem quite right then it's always better to seek medical attention, even if just for reassurance,' she adds. Thankfully, that didn't apply to me. But my recovery felt achingly slow. I couldn't take Logan for more than a walk around the block in her buggy. I
vividly remember one lap around our neighbourhood as my scar ached and heart pounded thinking that a full recovery was beyond my reach. How could I ever get back to exercising in the way I loved if I could barely manage a walk around the block? It was perhaps this thought that drove me, at four weeks postpartum, to push myself. I took Logan for
a slow 45-minute walk — something I'd never have classified as 'exercise' before — and was rewarded with more aches around my scar and reinvigorated bleeding. Yay. Moral of the story: patience, grasshopper. Get your doc's clearance before you begin any kind of exercise postpartum. 'Women who have a C-section (without complications) should
wait at least 6-8 weeks to allow everything to heal,' Dr Jackson-Spence says. 'A C-section is a big operation and your body needs time to heal properly before adding the extra stress of exercise. Exercising before being given the ok by a medical professional could delay wound healing and increase risk of complications.'I didn't experience any, but my
gung-ho attitude set my recovery back. From there on in, I was determined to take it extra slow. Another four weeks of this ensued (if you can call taking care of a newborn taking it slow), before I was ready to try again. This time, with help. My postpartum exercise journey Before we progress any further, some housekeeping. This was my journey.
Every pregnancy, birth and recovery is totally different. It's always best to check with your own doctors or health professionals about when it's safe for you to exercise again, and how. This is just what I did to get back to exercise, and I'm sharing it to give you the confidence and tools you need to do the same for you, if and when you are ready. Here's
everything that helped me.1.I got checked — twiceI went for a check-up with my doctor at the standard eight-week mark. She looked at my C-section scar, which was healing up well. Then she asked me a handful of questions about pain and bleeding and declared me fit to exercise again. 'But don't overdo it,' she warned and sent me on my way. The
more detailed physical check came a few days later, when I visited a women's health physio. I'd learned from several postpartum articles I'd written for WH that a specialist MOT is the gold standard in exercise clearance postpartum. So off I trotted to Lonese Jacobs' practice. Lonese spent about 30 minutes asking me about my pregnancy, birth and
general health and fitness, before moving on to a full-body assessment. Then she had me lie down so she could examine my abdominis ('six-pack' muscles), diagnosing me with diastasis recti — a separation of those usually tight-knit muscles that is really
common during pregnancy. Finally, she snapped on her latex gloves for a more intimate examination. She had me tighten my pelvic floor muscles around her finger (I said intimate, didn't I?) to measure the strength of my contractions. When I'd dressed again, she gave me the lowdown on what I needed to take into account when getting back to
strength training. 'With your diastasis recti, you'll want to slowly build your abdominal strength back up with low-intensity moves, minding that there is no doming [when you're ctus abdominis pops up like a long mound running the length of your rectus muscles.'On
the pelvic floor — the fact that I had not yet experienced any leaking made me one of the lucky few, she told me. A meta-analysis in the International Urogynecology Journal found that almost a third of women experience urinary incontinence in the first three months postpartum. Instagram Engaging my pelvic floor during squats was key. Your pelvic
floor strength is fair,' she said. "I would recommend you focus on activating your pelvic floor exercises before you begin any other exercises before you begin any other exercises. So if you're squatting, focus on that squeeze before you begin any other exercises before you begin any other exercises. So if you're squatting, focus on that squeeze before you begin any other exercises.
'The load needs to be gradually increased,' she said. 2. I got (more) expert helpIf pregnancy, who was also a qualified pre- and post-natal trainer, Jake van't Hoff from Beyond Fitness Coaching. We had a call (Jake is based in
Edinburgh) to discuss my goals. 'I just want to be strong,' I told him. 'I want to not feel aches and pains when I get up in the morning, I want to pick her up with ease in one, two, five years from now,' And so operation "get silly strong", as Jake dubbed it, was a go.
My first attempt at deadlifts post-pregnancy. First, he made absolutely sure I'd been checked by my doctor, and, first prize, a women's health physio, 'With any client postpartum, there needs to be an assessment of their pelvic floor, any ab separation and core control, ideally by a female health physio, 'he says. I sent over Lonese's report, and he got to
work devising a plan that catered to both what I wanted and what my body needed. Jake's advice before letting me lose in the gym? 'Start slow, but try not to be too cautious or avoidant with exercise. Don't worry about smashing every session, but don't write the week off if you miss one or two — do whatever you can or have time for. It doesn't get
easier by leaving it longer to get back into it so once you're physically able try to start that routine again.'My postpartum workout planGoal #1: Core and pelvic floor functionContrary to what one might expect, this did not mean a lengthy roster of abdominal exercises and endless kegels. Instead, Jake programmed in classic compound exercises like
squats, deadlifts, and lunges, with reminders to brace my core and contract my pelvic floor. InstagramDeadlifts were part of my workout plan. 'This was very much a case of relearning movement patterns without compromising your core/pelvic floor control,' he says. Initially, there was only one 'ab' move in my workouts, which I was to perform three
sets of at the end of every session: dead bugs, knees bent, and with legs only. 'I started with exercises I knew would be least likely to cause doming — where you could keep your spine and core in a fairly neutral position for you, postpartum. Things like a bent-knee dead bug are good here as you're lying on your back with a small range of motion,'
Jake adds. 'From here we'd look to progress that challenge to your core without compromising on the control we'd established. 'Exercises included: Starting small and gradually increasing my weight allowed me to get to where I am now. Goal #2: Carry Logan around without arm and back aches Jake added in plenty of upper body work to cater to my
desire to heave my increasingly heavy baby around without my arms and back aching. Logan needed lots of rocking and bouncing to fall asleep for the glutes also have a part to play here, as well as in goal #1. 'Glutes play such a large role in day-to-day life,' lake says. 'They
support the rest of your core muscles as well as supporting the pelvis.'My postpartum plan included lots of upper-body work, to get me strong enough to carry Logan. Exercises included: All of the exercises above made for a well-rounded full-body plan. Jake distributed these moves across three workouts per week, which would take about an hour
each.3. I went back to the gymWhile I could have exercised at home (I eventually did invest in some home gym equipment to eliminate the commute time to the gym when I went back to work at a gym initially. Getting actual physical space from Logan, while hard at first,
turned out to be so important for my mental health in those early months. It helped me feel like me, rather than a milk-making, nappy-changing, sleepless zombie. It helped me bridge the gap between who I used to be and my new identity as a mum.4. I leaned on family and friends that said, leaving the house when you have a newborn is hard — not
just mentally, but logistically. Mercifully, I had help that made this possible. Three times a week my mum-in-law came around and spent about 2 hours with Lo: enough time for me to go to the gym, and shower when I came home. Still, I felt so out of place in the gym at first. My body had, of course, changed, my form was not what it used to be, and I
was lifting the lightest possible dumbbells available. I'm sure barely anyone glanced my way, but I felt like everyone was looking at me. While I knew these insecurities were entirely internal, no amount of positive self-talk could turn them off — so I called on a friend. Meeting a friend at the gym is a hack I've always recommended to gym newbies who
feel a little self-conscious, so I took my own advice. She was new to the weights room and also felt anxious alongside the grunting blokes. We both felt more comfortable together. Also: it was great to have someone to giggle with me when I sprung (yet another) breastmilk leak. One year later I continued with the program above for about two months,
checking in weekly with Jake. He monitored my form with videos I filmed in the gym, tweaking things where I looked a bit wonky. After eight weeks, I switched over to an updated strength training plan Jake had written for me. The moves and muscles targeted were similar, but he upped the ante on abdominal exercises. My beloved dead bugs
progressed to arms and legs, and I now found myself doing things like side planks (at the start, only for about 30 seconds each side). InstagramSide planks are now a regular in my routine. Slowly (oh, so slowly) the weights increased. I gained more control. I didn't have to focus as hard on bracing my pelvic floor - it just happened naturally as I became
used to the movements After seven months of consistent, humbling work (sometimes only once or twice a week when Logan wasn't sleeping well), I felt almost as strong as I had before I got pregnant. By 11 months, I was suddenly lifting heavier than I had. The PBs started rolling in. Looking back, I'm amazed at how far I've come since creeping
gingerly around that hospital ward. The aches and pains are gone. I can tote a now-10kg Logan around in one arm, no problem. But the mental health benefits of exercising have far outweighed the physical changes. It's helped me find myself again after the cataclysmic shift of pregnancy and birthOr rather, a new, silly strong, mum version of myself.
Kirsti BuickKirsti is a health and fitness journalist, a personal trainer and tech junkie. She's a South African journalist who followed her passion for health and fitness all the way to the UK, where she now spends her days sweating it up and perfecting her form in gyms all over London.
```