

# Improving Your Recovery After Birth – Physiotherapy Advice

After you have given birth we recommend that you follow some simple steps which will improve your postnatal recovery.

## Immediately after your baby's birth

**Rest** – lie flat for 30 minutes, twice a day. This will help to minimise discomfort, reduce swelling and take extra weight off your pelvic floor and lower abdominal muscles.

**Ice** – following a vaginal birth or an attempted vaginal birth, ice helps to reduce pain and swelling around the perineum. Ice should be placed inside your pad for 20 minutes every 2-3 hours and can be continued until pain and swelling cease.

**Compression** – firm supportive underwear will help support the perineum and lower abdominals and reduce pain and discomfort. This will also help to start the healing process. Control briefs can be purchased from department stores and should be worn for the first six weeks. As a guide, garments should be two sizes bigger than your pre-pregnancy size.

**Exercise** – pelvic floor and deep abdominal exercises help you return to your pre-pregnancy shape and assist with healing around any stitches you may have. They can be safely started one to two days following the birth of your baby, provided there is no increase in your pain.

## Getting into and out of bed

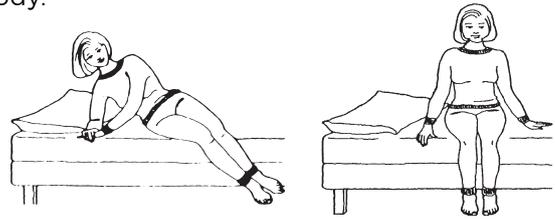
It is important to support your stomach muscles as you get into and out of bed. The most comfortable and best way to do this is to log roll.

### How to log roll:

- Bend your knees and roll on to your side. Keep your shoulders and hips in line.



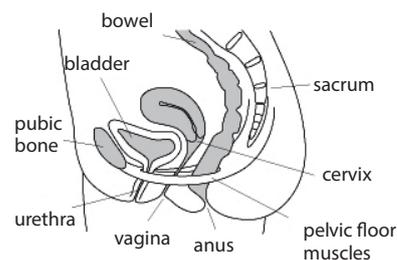
- Slide your feet over the side of the bed and push yourself up using both of your hands in front of your body.



- Do the same in reverse to get into bed.

## Pelvic floor muscle exercises

The pelvic floor muscles are a small but very important group of muscles, particularly in women. They lie deep inside the pelvis and act to support the pelvic organs and control continence. During pregnancy, these muscles become weakened due to the action of pregnancy hormones and the weight of the baby pushing down. It is important that you re-train these muscles during the postnatal period to prevent problems, such as incontinence.



All women should exercise their pelvic floor muscles everyday.

If you have experienced any urinary leakage or trouble passing urine since the birth of your baby please notify your midwife, physiotherapist or doctor.