

STEP 5: REST AND RELAX

Palm Press

This tones upper back muscles, but calms and relaxes you. It is a good way to end your gentle recovery stretches. Even if you only feel like doing one or two steps, always end with palm press.



Lie in zero balance

Place the palms together over the chest
Elbows & shoulders are relaxed & down
IN Press palms together & back ribs
downwards

OUT Press a little more, then relax

Repeat for several breaths until you feel calm

Lie for a few moments until you feel ready to get up

GETTING UP SAFELY

Spiralling up: From the floor



Lie in zero balance

Roll slowly to one side, knees & thighs 45° apart.
Come onto elbows, then hands, then knees.
Walk hands back to knees, tuck toes under then stand up

Spiralling up: From the bed



Lie in zero balance

Roll slowly to one side, knees & thighs 45° apart.
Come onto elbows, then hands and push yourself upright to sit on side of bed. Bend forward and straighten legs to stand up.

5 GENTLE STEPS TO POSTNATAL RECOVERY



These gentle breathing and stretching exercises have been developed by Birthlight.

They are safe to do soon after the birth of your baby, perhaps one hour after a vaginal delivery, and once the drains have been removed after a Caesarean section. They combine deep breathing with small, slow movements and stretches.

Postnatal recovery stretches can help you regain your posture, close up your abdomen after giving birth, and can prevent stress incontinence or womb prolapse.

The more you practise the postnatal recovery steps the more beneficial they will be, but don't do more than you feel able to. Trust your own instincts and build up your practice gradually and sensibly. Your body will thank you in the future!

Birthlight
For the greater enjoyment of Pregnancy,
Birth and Babies

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5 GENTLE STEPS TO POSTNATAL RECOVERY

Re-claim your body after giving birth

Postnatal recovery stretches combine deep breathing with small, slow movements and stretches. They can help you:

- regain your posture
- close up your body after giving birth
- prevent stress incontinence and womb prolapse.

The recovery stretches are safe to do as soon as one hour after the birth of your baby.

Read ALL the directions in this leaflet before starting your recovery.

STEP 1: FINDING ZERO BALANCE



Lie on your back on the bed or the floor
Place a support under your head and under your lower back (if needed). Relax your arms.
Bend the knees, feet hip width apart.
Walk the feet closer to or further from the hips until your pelvis is level, neither tilted forward or backwards. Your pelvis is now in zero balance.

STEP 2: CLOSING YOUR ABDOMEN

Practising reverse breathing regularly can prevent prolapse and stress incontinence caused by overstretched pelvic floor muscles. It exercises abdominal and back muscles, toning your waist and abdomen.

Reverse Breathing (1)

Do this version until your pelvic floor muscles have recovered from birth



Lie in zero balance
Breathe IN Pull the abdomen inwards
Breathe OUT Pull abdomen in a little more
Relax at the end of the outbreath for this and all the stretches in this leaflet.
Take a normal breath & repeat
Breath flow should be smooth & wavelike
Practice until you can do 6 reverse breaths in a row

Reverse Breathing (2)

Do this version when your pelvic floor muscles are no longer sore (about 1 week after vaginal delivery)



Lie in zero balance
IN Tighten & lift the pelvic floor muscles
OUT Tighten & lift inwards a little more
Relax at the end of the outbreath
(When you tighten the pelvic floor you automatically tighten the abdomen and back muscles.)
Practice doing 6 breaths in a row.
Do 2 sets of 6 breaths up to 3 times a day.

STEP 3: RE-ALIGN YOUR SPINE

Reclaim your posture after giving birth. Re-align your neck, upper and lower back, sacrum and pelvis.

Pelvis Stabilizer

Lie in zero balance

- a) with feet parallel
- b) with feet turned inwards
- c) with feet turned outwards



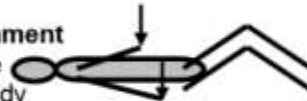
Breathe with the feet in these 3 different positions

- IN Press down with the feet & sacrum
- OUT Press the feet & sacrum towards each other without lifting or tilting the pelvis
- Relax at the end of the outbreath

Lower Back Alignment

Lie in zero balance

- Arms alongside body
- Palms down
- IN Press palms downwards without lifting pelvis
- OUT Press palms down more, then relax



Upper Back Alignment

Lie in zero balance

- Bend elbows
- Place fingers on shoulders
- IN Press shoulders back & down
- OUT Press shoulders down more, then relax



Neck Alignment

Lie in zero balance

- No head support or small roll under neck
- IN & OUT Turn head slowly from side to side 2 or 3 times, with relaxed breathing



STEP 4: CLOSING YOUR BODY

Close your body after opening it to grow your baby and give birth.

Buttock Grip

Lie on back

Legs stretched out

Cross one ankle over the other

IN Clench the buttocks & hook the feet together

OUT Grip the buttocks a little tighter, then relax

Cross the ankles the other way & repeat



Leg Over

Bend knee

Cross foot to

outside of other leg

Place sole next to shin, knee or thigh

Make sure your hips are level & square to the body

IN Press foot down & stretch other heel away

OUT Press & stretch more, then relax

Swap the legs over & repeat on other side



Knee Lift

Lie in zero balance

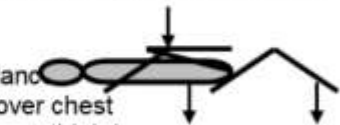
Lift one knee over chest

& hug the knee or thigh in

IN Press into the other foot & the lower back

OUT Press a little more, then relax

Repeat with the other knee hugged into the chest



Side Stretch

Lie in zero balance

Stretch one leg out, stretch same arm back

IN Stretch into the heel and hand

OUT Stretch a little more, then relax

Repeat on the other side

