



NORTHWEST
— WELLNESS —

Vaginal Delivery

Recovery Timeline

So you had a vaginal birth? Congratulations on your bundle of joy!

Take a look at these helpful tips to feel better faster:

At the hospital:

- ✓ Perineal cold packs, witch hazel pads, or a 5-minute sitz bath may help pain and swelling. Use what feels best for you. Feel free to ask your physician or PT for help finding these items!
- ✓ After going to the bathroom: use a peri bottle filled with warm water to spray the vaginal area clean, then dab dry.
- ✓ Breastfeeding? Make sure to find a comfortable position for you! Here are some ideas:



- ✓ Protect your pelvic area by rolling to your side before sitting up. Sitting straight up might be painful and is not good for your healing muscles.
- ✓ Breathe out when getting out of bed or a chair, when picking up your baby, and especially when pooping! Holding your breath might feel easier, but puts a lot of pressure on your belly and pelvic area.
- ✓ Drink lots of water and consider a stool softener to help make that first poop more comfortable.
- ✓ Now is the time to relax and recover. However, walking, gentle kegels (pelvic floor squeezes) and abdominal pull-ins should be OK as long as you check it with your physician or PT first.

The First 6 Weeks (or until your check up with your doctor):

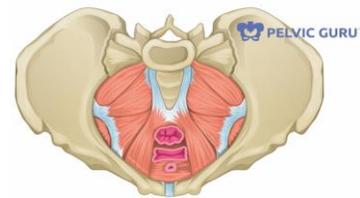
- ✓ Wait until cleared by your physician to have sex, exercise or start lifting anything heavier than your baby.
- ✓ If you had a vaginal cut or tear with stitches, you can start gently massaging the scar for a couple minutes each day once the area has healed (usually by 1-2 weeks after delivery).
- ✓ If you have any of these symptoms, or something feels “wrong”, call your physician. Do NOT wait until your next scheduled appointment.

✗ Bleeding or oozing from your vaginal scar (if you had a cut or tear)

- ✗ Gaps or separation of the vaginal scar (if you had a cut or tear)
- ✗ A lot of swelling or pain in the belly or vagina
- ✗ Vaginal bleeding that fills more than one pad an hour

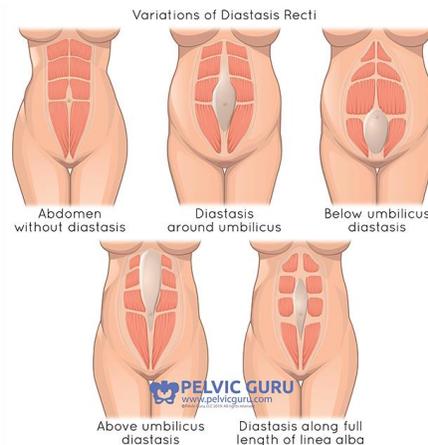
After 6 weeks

- ✓ Take all the time you need to return to sex and exercise. Listen to your body. If you are not ready, know that you are not alone. Talk to your physician or PT for help!
- ✓ After 9 months of pregnancy and delivery, your pelvic floor muscles might need some help. Talk to your doctor or pelvic PT if you notice:
 - ✗ urinary incontinence
 - ✗ pelvic pain, heaviness or pressure
 - ✗ constipation or pain with bowel movements
 - ✗ pain during sex, pelvic exams or tampon use
 - ✗ anything feels “different” in the vagina or rectum



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- ✓ Does your belly feel weak or look different? The abdominal muscles might separate during pregnancy. This is called *diastasis recti abdominis* (DR or DRA), and can be helped by physical therapy.



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- ✓ Once cleared by your physician, you can slowly get back to any exercise you want! Here are some tips:
 - ☆ Start small and build up as your body feels more comfortable.
 - ☆ Remember to breathe!! Your pelvic and abdominal muscles will work better.
 - ☆ Pain is a sign you might be pushing too hard.

- ★ If you are experiencing any symptoms, see a pelvic floor PT. We are happy to help you find the best exercises for you!

One last reminder: Your postpartum body is beautiful no matter how it has changed!