



# How can you be more active after childbirth?

## Active before?

### Return gradually.

If you were **already active before** giving birth, **returning gradually** and building up activity slowly has benefits for your physical and mental health.

## Not active before?

### Start gradually now.

If you're **new to activity**, **starting gradually** and **building up** your activity levels means you too can improve your physical and mental health.

# Why should you be active following childbirth?

Key benefits include:



Reduces depression and worries



Helps to control weight and return to pre-pregnancy weight



Improves mood



Improves sleep



Improves fitness



Improves tummy muscle tone and strength

## How much activity is recommended?

Aim to gradually build back up to accumulating 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity throughout the week. Don't worry, you need not do it all at once and every activity counts!

Build back up to muscle strength and balance activities twice per week e.g. pushing the pram uphill, taking the stairs, carrying shopping bags, exercises with your baby, and postnatal yoga.

For more ideas and inspiration visit:

[www.activepregnancyfoundation.org/findyouractive](http://www.activepregnancyfoundation.org/findyouractive)

## What does it mean to be active at a moderate intensity?

Moderate intensity activities involve any activity that makes you breathe faster whilst still being able to hold a conversation.



# If you've had a straightforward birth, you can try the following activities as soon as you feel up to it:



Walking



Gentle Stretches



Deep stomach and pelvic floor exercises



Taking the stairs

## When can I start being active after childbirth?

Reintroduction of physical activity after childbirth should be gradual and individualised.

Give your body time to heal, prioritise rest and recovery in the early weeks. If you've had a straightforward birth, you can start gentle exercises as soon as you feel up to it. This could include walking, gentle stretches, pelvic floor exercises and exercises that target the deepest layer of the abdominal muscles. If you've had a caesarean or any surgical intervention and/or complications, your recovery time will be longer.

The 6-8 week postnatal check is a good time to discuss physical activity with your healthcare team. Around this time and depending on how you feel, activities can gradually be reintroduced.

If you weren't active during pregnancy, start gradually and slowly build up to moderate intensity physical activity.



If you were active during pregnancy, restart gradually, building up to moderate intensity physical activity before progressing to higher intensity activities.

With any signs and symptoms of pelvic floor and/or abdominal wall dysfunction, more intense activities should not resume and referral to a specialist pelvic health physiotherapist is recommended.

To find out more about #ThisMumMoves visit:  
[www.activepregnancyfoundation.org/thismummoves](http://www.activepregnancyfoundation.org/thismummoves)

# Important safety messages

There is no evidence that being active after childbirth is harmful to healthy women. Being active is also safe for those who breastfeed their baby.

Depending on your delivery, listen to your body and start gently. It is important not to do too much too soon. Remember, if you experience any signs or symptoms of pelvic floor and/or abdominal wall dysfunction, seek advice from a healthcare professional.

Be active in your own way. Not every woman is the same. Being active with baby and others is a great way to socialise and incorporate physical activity into your lifestyle.

Join the thousands of women finding ways to be active after childbirth.

Share your activity journey with #ThisMumMoves



The information on this leaflet is based on guidance provided by the UK Chief Medical Officers (2019):

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/physical-activity-guidelines](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/physical-activity-guidelines)

This Mum Moves – Postnatal Leaflet – July 2022

© Active Pregnancy Foundation 2022  
© Institute of Health Visiting 2022

The This Mum Moves programme is delivered in partnership by the Active Pregnancy Foundation and Institute of Health Visiting.