2025 Canadian Guideline for Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour and Sleep throughout the First Year Postpartum

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Evidence based guidelines for supporting postpartum well-being.

The Get Active Questionnaire for Postpartum **is linked at the QR code below designed for self-completion and helps identify the few people who should consult a healthcare provider before beginning or resuming postpartum physical activity.**

Recomendations

The specific recommendations in the 2025 Canadian Guideline for Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour and Sleep throughout the First Year Postpartum are provided below:

1 We recommend all postpartum women and people without contraindications be physically active to obtain clinically meaningful benefits (e.g., prevent and reduce depressive symptoms).

2 We suggest women and people with potential contraindications to physical activity (see below) obtain medical clearance from a primary healthcare provider (e.g., family physician) about beginning or continuing moderate- to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) following childbirth. In most cases, MVPA may proceed but modifications may be required until the medical problem has resolved.

3 We recommend accumulating at least 120 minutes of MVPA (e.g., brisk walking, cycling) spread over four or more days of the week that incorporates a variety of aerobic and resistance training activities.

4 We recommend performing pelvic floor muscle training (PFMT) daily to reduce the risk of urinary incontinence and rehabilitate pelvic floor muscles impacted by pregnancy, labour, and/or delivery. Instruction on proper technique from a pelvic floor physiotherapist is recommended to obtain optimal benefits.

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Ready to be active after the birth of your child? Complete the pre-screening tool for postpartum individuals by scanning the QR code on the front page of this booklet to ensure safe engagement in physical activity or whether a healthcare provider needs to provide medical clearance.

5 We recommend beginning or returning to MVPA in the first 12 weeks postpartum to support mental health.

6 We suggest initiating early mobilization with light-intensity physical activity (e.g., gentle walking, pelvic floor muscle training) and progressing to MVPA once surgical incisions or perineal tears have sufficiently healed and vaginal bleeding (lochia) does not increase with MVPA.

7 We suggest following an individualized, gradual, and symptom-based progression toward at least 120 minutes/ week of MVPA.

8 We recommend adopting a healthy sleep hygiene routine (e.g., avoid screen time and maintain a dark, quiet environment before bed) to support maternal mental health.

9 We suggest limiting sedentary time to 8 hours or less, including no more than 3 hours of recreational screen time, and breaking up long periods of sitting when possible.

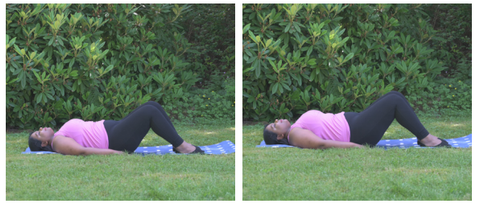
Exercise List

1 Diaphragmatic Breathing

1. Find a comfortable seated position or lie on your back with your knees bent. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly.
2. Inhale a slow, complete breath, letting your pelvic floor and core muscles relax.
3. Exhale slowly through your mouth and focus on contracting your pelvic floor, pulling your abdomen in, and closing your rib cage.

2 Crook Lying Pelvic Tilts

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Inhale, then exhale as you engage your lower abdominal muscles to tilt your pelvis upwards and flatten your back into the floor. Inhale to release, allowing your pubic bone and sternum to lengthen away from each other.
2. To increase the difficulty, you can do this with your baby placed on your pelvis or thighs, holding them securely

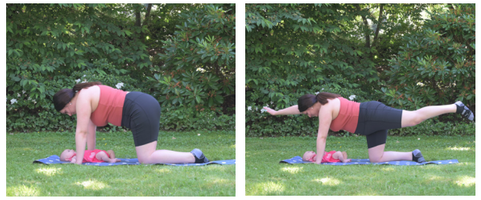


3 Glute Bridge

1. Lie on your back with knees bent and feet hip width apart. You're going to drive the hips up, squeezing the glutes and the top to hold for a moment, then lower back down.
2. Remember to keep the belly button toward the spine to engage your core and pelvic floor.
3. While preforming the steps listed above, the difficulty may be increased by resting your baby securely on your pelvis or thighs.

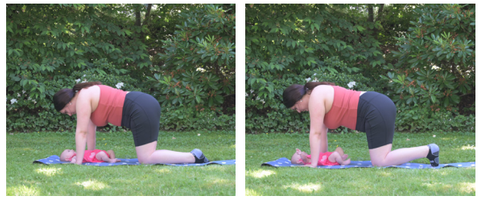
4 Cat Cow

1. Start in a tabletop position on your hands and knees, with your neck in line with your back, your shoulders over your wrists and your hips over your knees.
2. Option to include the baby by placing them on their back beneath you.
3. Inhale as you arch your back and lift your head, releasing the belly toward the floor. Exhale as you round your back upward, pulling the bellybutton into the spine, tucking your chin to your chest.



5 Bird-Dog

1. Come to a tabletop position on your hands and knees, with your neck in line with your back, your shoulders over your wrists and your hips over your knees.
2. Gently exhale to engage your pelvic floor and core as you slowly raise one arm and the opposite leg until they are in line with your back. Return them to the ground and raise the second arm and leg.



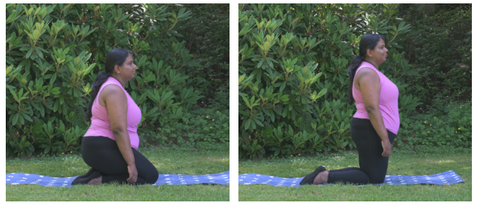
6 Bear Hold (*progression after bird dog is easily performed)

1. Start on all fours on the floor. engage your whole core, and lift your knees off the ground for 10 seconds.

Exercise List

7 Kneeling Hip Thrust

1. Start by sitting on your knees. Exhale and rise up to a kneeling position by squeezing your glutes and drawing in your abdominals. Inhale and relax as you lower back down, then repeat.
2. You can perform the hip thrust while holding your baby close to your chest to add resistance.



8 Squats

1. Stand with feet shoulder width apart
2. Inhale and relax your pelvic floor as your lower into the squat, bending your knees and pushing your hips back.
3. Remember to keep your chest up and to engage your core for stability.
4. Exhale and engage the pelvic floor as you rise back up to your standing position.
5. If needed, hold onto a support to maintain balance.
6. To increase the difficulty, perform the steps above while holding your baby securely against your chest.

9 Lateral Squat Rock

1. Standing with your feet shoulder width apart, lower into a squat just above a 90-degree angle in your knees.
2. While in the squat, take a step to the side, then back to the middle. Repeat on the other side.

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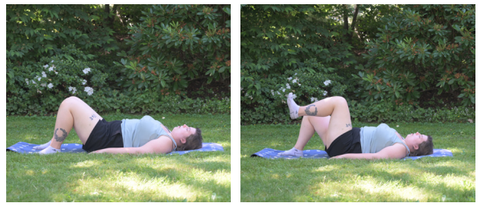
10 Transverse Abdominis Isometric

1. While lying on your back with your knees bent, exhale and contract your deep abdominals by bringing your belly button down toward your spine (think about tightening a string between your front two pelvic bones). Hold for 5 seconds.

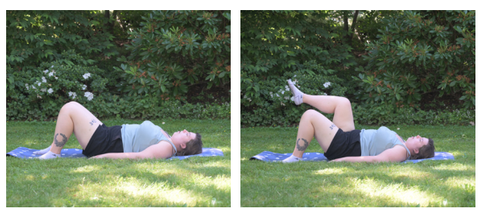
11 Abdominal Oblique Cross Crawl

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
2. Contract your pelvic floor muscles, press the hollow of your back against the floor.
3. Support your upper body by placing one hand behind your head.
4. Reach out with the other hand and touch the outside of your opposite knee.
5. Return to starting position and repeat on the other side.



12 Core Stability March

1. Lie on the floor with knees bent, feet flat, and the spine neutral.
2. Without letting your pelvis move, slowly lift one knee to a 90-degree angle, keeping the other foot on the floor. Return the leg to starting position and repeat on the other side.

Toe Taps (Progression)

1. Lie in the same starting position (knees bent with feet flat on the floor).
2. Exhale and engage the abs to bring legs up one at a time to a tabletop position.
3. Keeping the knees bent, inhale and slowly lower one foot to the floor, then exhale and return that foot to tabletop. Repeat on the opposite side.