

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXERCISES

1. Exercise of the pelvic floor

The pelvic floor is key to female health due to its support of the pelvis and pelvic organs such as bladder, uterus and bowel. In pregnancy it has to provide a lot more support to all organs due to the changes and increased weight of the uterus. Pressure is also exerted during the pushing of the second stage of labour.

Exercise of the pelvic floor involves contracting the muscles, holding and releasing. These muscles are not exercised during any form of sport, yoga, and movement.

Exercises:

- Provide better support for uterus and other pelvic organs
- Prevent and alleviate haemorrhoids
- Give support to the whole pelvic girdle

CAUTION: Pelvic girdle and Symphysis pubis instability

The insidious or sudden pain felt in the pubis, groin and thighs, which are frequently accompanied by low back or sacroiliac pain. Symphyseal clicking or grinding can be felt by the women. Walking, lifting, weight-bearing, turning over in bed, getting in and out of the car, stretches involving abduction place strain on the joint causing pain, which might be felt several hours later. Ask your therapist Kat for safe exercises, if you suspect any of these conditions.

2. Exercise of the abdominal muscles

Abdominal muscles act along with the pelvic floor to give pelvic stability. During pregnancy they maintain the proper position of the uterus and other organs and assist in the second stage of labour. They also help to control the tilt of the pelvis, to flex the trunk, to rise up from lying and stabilise the lower back. Weakness of abdominal muscles is a common cause of backache. Unfortunately, due to the modern sedentary lifestyle, for most women the abdominal muscles are not used enough to provide good strength. Underexercised muscles are unable to give adequate support to the pelvis and lumbar spine. They may also contribute to pelvic girdle and Symphysis pubis instability.

CAUTION: Excessive separation of Rectus abdominis muscles

Some degree of separation of recti muscles is to be expected during pregnancy. But excessive separation means that the abdominal wall has become significantly weakened and care needs to be taken with the type of exercises done. No sit-ups, no sitting up from lying down and no lifting. Ask your therapist Kat for identification of recti muscles separation and safe exercises.

3. Breathing exercise

Good breathing is needed for a good supply of oxygen for the mother and baby. Take a long breath out through the mouth, pausing until you need to breath in, followed by a long breath in through the nose. With breathing out the abdominal muscles should contract, drawing in. Your diaphragm rises. As you breathe in, the muscles lengthen and abdomen gently pushes out. Your diaphragm falls and the ribcage expands. With the in breath you can visualise drawing in all you need physically and emotionally. With the out breath imagine letting go of tiredness, negative emotions or tension in your body. Deep breathing is important especially during the labour as it helps the body to produce endorphins and oxytocin, which are its natural painkillers.

4. Visualisation

Use your imagination in a focused way. It helps to switch off the conscious mind and tap into the power of the subconscious. You can imagine the baby in a good position, a fast but smooth baby delivery. Or if you need to relax just see yourself in a meadow with a lot of beautiful flowers. Also you can imagine your cervix to be like a flower opening out petals with each contraction.