

MINDFUL MOVEMENT FOR PREGNANCY



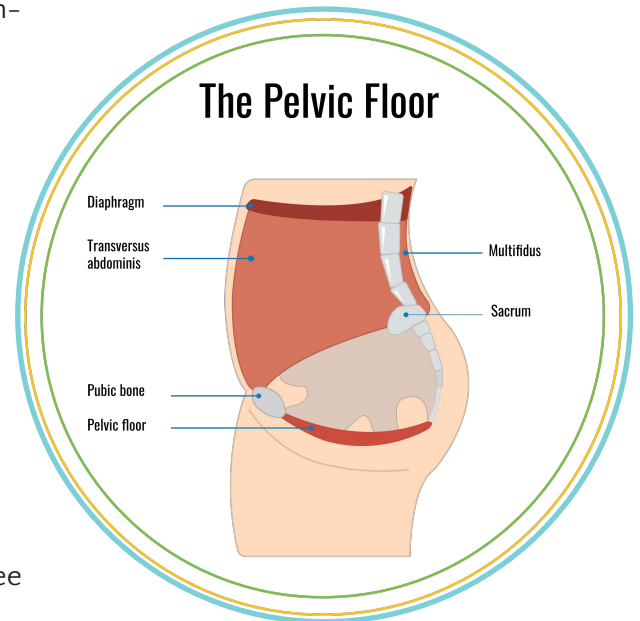
Exercises to Strengthen the Pelvic Floor, Ease Labor, Soothe Sore Muscles, & Help with Postpartum Recovery

THE PELVIC FLOOR:

The pelvic floor muscles are part of your deep core muscles. They start at the base of your pelvis and stretch up into your diaphragm or breathing muscle. The pelvic floor muscles also include your front rectus abdominus and your multifidus, known as your deep spine muscles.

These layers of muscles “hang” like a sling in the base of the pelvis, holding the pelvic organs such as the bowel, bladders and uterus (for women). You can think of it almost like a hammock. The stronger the hammock, the healthier your organs will be, including your core and back muscles. A strong pelvic floor is important for both men and women. For men, it can prevent prostate cancer and improve sexual performance. For women it can increase sexual sensation, orgasmic potential, and prevent incontinence, constipation, and low back pain.

There are specific movements that are extremely helpful for strengthening and bringing awareness to the pelvic floor, improving core strength while preventing diastasis recti (separation of the abdominals), and making the labor process easier over all. These exercises (see page 2) can also be good post-pregnancy to strengthen muscles that have been stretched out during birth. You can think of these muscles as the same ones you use to hold a bowel movement or stop urination in midstream. To improve pelvic floor health, it’s important to learn how to engage as well as relax these muscles.



EXERCISES TO AVOID DURING PREGNANCY:

Stop doing ab curls, crunches, or front planks as soon as you find out you are pregnant. As the uterus starts to stretch for your growing baby, it pushes against your front core muscles known as the rectus abdominus. Any ab exercises that cause the lower abs to form a “coning” shape or get you into the C curve position, can increase your risk of tearing or splitting the rectus abdominus and weakening your pelvic floor. This is called diastasis recti and can make labor and recovery after labor much more difficult.

If doing yoga, avoid chaturangas, up dogs, camel, or any pose on your belly. Of course, always remember to do what feels good to you and listen to your body.





IDEAL POSTURE

5 key checkpoints (ankle, knee, hip, shoulder, ear) should all be aligned with knees slightly bent and chest forward



BRIDGES WITH CORE BALL

Squeeze ball between knees to activate pelvic floor muscles



BRIDGES

With knees together, lift hips up while squeezing the pelvic floor muscles



SQUATS

Essential movement to prepare for labor, may advance into weight squats



SIDE PLANKS

A great core stabilizer to activate obliques



SUPTABADAKANASANA BRIDGE

Knees open wide with soles of feet together, lift hips up as you squeeze your glutes



STANDING FIGURE FOUR

Place opposite ankle to opposite knee and sit back to stretch piriformus



SPINAL BALANCE

From table top position, lift opposite arm and leg while curling into elbow to knee



FOAM ROLL

Restorative tool to improve alignment from over stretched ligaments and added weight (may lie on foam roll in line with spine to open up chest & airways)

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

Meditative exercise to strengthen and relax pelvic floor and improve breath awareness for labor and delivery.

Start by inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your nose. As you inhale, let your belly expand with air and as you exhale, squeeze belly and pelvic floor up and in. A healthy pelvic floor stretches as you breathe in and contracts as you breathe out.



WARRIOR 2 POSE

Wide legged movements to open the pelvic and prepare for labor



TRIANGLE POSE

Deep hamstring stretch to alleviate low back pain

RESISTANCE BALL

Helps to create space in pelvis, ease lower back pain and stretch perineum. Bouncing on the resistance ball can help the perineal (area between vagina & anus) to stretch in preparation for labor.



COW/CAT POSE

Movements to lengthen pelvis and create more mobility in the spine

