

A GUIDE TO
BIRTH PREP

A FREE guide supporting pregnancy
and early post-partum days.



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a gentle reminder to you, mama

As a soon-to-be Mum there are many things that are about to change. Quickly, your world is going to revolve around your baby.

Sometimes its magic and sometimes their arrival doesn't look anything like what you had imagined. Either way, you are doing the best you can. Be gentle with yourself. There are supports available if you need them.

This prep package is intended to give you some tips that may help during delivery and the early postpartum days. Take them or leave them - and be sure to never let them replace your intuition.

You know your body and you are its expert. Please feel free to reach out at any time,

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INTRODUCTION

Pelvic Floor Physiotherapy (PFPT) is an area of specialized practice that requires further education following physiotherapy licensing.

A pelvic floor physiotherapy assessment during pregnancy can:

- help assess for any underlying dysfunction of the pelvic floor
- address current symptoms/issues or to simply ensure pelvic health is optimized before childbirth.

An additional benefit is to have a known baseline which will help to guide rehabilitation after delivery.

This guide is only a sample! We highly encourage you to connect with pelvic floor physiotherapist Erin Hennessy (the writer of this guide) if you have questions or concerns during or after your pregnancy!

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OR CALL (705) 327-5400



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ACTIVITY GUIDELINES IN PREGNANCY

Pregnancy and childbirth are a feat of physical strength and endurance. Just as you would train for a marathon prior to race day, childbirth can be planned and trained for. Adopting fitness habits during pregnancy is also protective against pelvic girdle and low back pain associated with your growing baby.

The 2019 Canadian Guideline for Physical Activity throughout Pregnancy recommends **at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity for healthy pregnant person** and agree that the benefits of exercise at this time greatly outweigh the risks.

Ideally, pregnant women should be completing some form of **physical activity 3 days per week** but daily activity is recommended. As with the general population, **both cardiovascular exercise and resistance training are recommended** and gentle stretching may also be beneficial.

Proper warm- up and cool-down periods before and after activity are recommended to ensure muscles are prepared for activity and the body is able to actively recover afterwards. The guideline also **recommends pelvic floor exercises are to be completed daily** and recommend that proper instruction be provided.



A pelvic floor physiotherapist, physiotherapist or pre- and post-natal fitness specialist can help you find appropriate exercises for pregnancy and guide your routine as some considerations should be made.

For example, some pregnant women should modify positions from lying flat on their back if they feel unwell, light-headed or nauseous. If you're unsure about where to begin, please reach out for help. Activity during pregnancy can be so much more than just preparing for pregnancy. The right exercises can help you to feel empowered both physically and mentally.



EXERCISES TO LENGTHEN THE PELVIC FLOOR

Lengthening of the pelvic floor is an important part of birth preparation to ensure that the muscles surrounding the birth canal are relaxed and mobile prior to childbirth

Here are some of my go-to exercises for lengthening the pelvic floor. In each picture you should appreciate how the space between the hip bones (side to side), and between pubic bones and tailbone (front to back) is lengthened allowing the pelvic floor muscles to stretch. I recommend that women spend 1-2 minutes in each position while deep breathing to gently stretch the pelvic floor. Use your deep breathing and try to feel your pelvic floor relax with every inhale.

Reminder: If you are experiencing any discomfort in these poses please do not continue with them. In the presence of pain the pelvic floor and hip muscles are likely to tense up which will be counterproductive. Also, you don't have time to do exercises that don't serve you, pregnancy is a time to focus on movements that feel good!



EXERCISES CONTINUED

1. HAPPY BABY POSE

Start by lying comfortably on your back. Next, bend your knees to 90 degrees and lift them up towards your hips. Grasp the inside arch of your feet and hold.

Modifications: Use a towel to assist in holding your foot if you are unable to reach.

Lay down beside a wall, try one leg at a time and support the raised leg against a wall.



2. DEEP SQUAT



Begin with your feet wider than hip width apart

Gently bend your knees and lower your tailbone towards the ground. Think about a weight suspended from a tailbone pulling you down as you lower.

Sink as low as feels comfortable- if you aren't able to rest comfortably in a deep squat prop yourself up using a wall, or place a yoga block/pillows under the buttock.

Additionally, you can support your lower body by resting your arms on a chair's seat or coffee table. Relax your pelvic floor as you breathe.



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EXERCISES CONTINUED

3. CHILD'S POSE

Begin in a crawl position on your hands and knees placing your hands and knees about 6 inches (or hip/shoulder width) apart. Rock back to sit onto your heels while keeping your hands on the ground. If your hips do not rest on your heels (as pictured) try placing a pillow between your buttocks and heels for added comfort during this stretch.



Think about lengthening through your spine and relaxing your neck. Remember to breathe during this stretch and try to check in with your pelvic floor. You should feel it gently relax or stretch on each inhale as the space between your sitz bones (the bony prominences we sit on- ischial tuberosities) widens.



birth bag checklist

Some items that may be helpful to pack in your birth bag or have easily accessible regardless of where you are planning to deliver your baby

clothing

- Comfortable robe & slippers
- Large, high-waisted underpants (the bigger the better) or post-partum underwear
- Nursing bra or tank top
- Going home outfit (comfort should be paramount)
- An extra pair of socks (hospital rooms run cold)
- Slip on or 'easy' on pair of shoes
- Extra hair ties

postpartum care

- Abdominal wrap or tensor bandage
- Pain medication (talk to your care provider about their preference)
- Large sanitary pads or adult diapers (writer's personal preference- diapers are SO easy!)
- Breast pads
- Lanolin cream or silver nipple cups to help soothe sore nipples
- Breast pump (manual pumps work well unless you plan on investing in a mechanical one)
- Peri-bottle (see Healing Helpers- page 22)
- Padsicles (see Healing Helpers- page 22)

miscellaneous

- Pillow & blanket
- Nursing pillow
- Small container of olive or coconut oil (can help get meconium off)
- Extra long phone charging cord
- Large water bottle (staying hydrated is SO important)
- Snacks

toiletries

- Scent-free travel sized shampoo/conditioner, lotion, deodorant
- Toothbrush & toothpaste
- Dry shampoo
- Lip balm
- Brush

don't forget!

- birth plan
- identification
- health card & insurance (if applicable)
- credit/debit for any last minute needs



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INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

Pelvic Floor & Core Anatomy
Pelvic Floor Muscle Training
Deep Breathing/Core Connection
Exercises to Lengthen the Pelvic Floor
Perineal Massage
Birth Positions
Open Glottis Pushing
What to Expect Post-Delivery
Healing Helpers
Ways Your Partners Can Help
Transfers/Early Movement Techniques
First Bowel Movement
Red Flags
Early Postpartum Exercises
Activity Guidelines (0-6 weeks)
Breastfeeding Stretches
6 Week Post-Partum Checkup
Belly (Cesarean) Birth
Postpartum Pelvic Floor Physiotherapy

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