

Patient information

Antenatal Exercises

Barts Health Physiotherapy Website:

www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/physiotherapy



What does this booklet cover?

This leaflet is designed to give you information about exercises that are safe to do while you are pregnant. Discuss any queries or worries with your physiotherapist.

Mild to moderate exercise is considered beneficial to the healthy pregnant woman, and is not harmful to the unborn baby (foetus). Regular exercise can prevent excessive weight gain in pregnancy (which is a risk factor for hypertension, diabetes, pre-eclampsia and still birth), and can help maintain cardiovascular fitness as well as mental health and well-being.

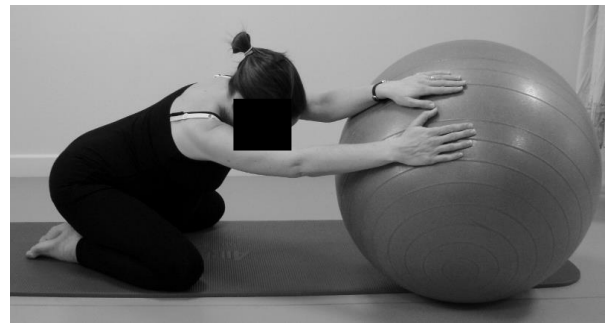
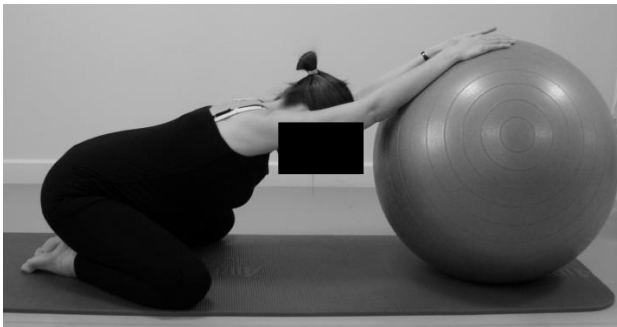
Aim to practice these exercises twice a day. If using a gym ball, position it near to something solid, e.g. door, sofa, that you can hold on to if needed.

DO NOT EXERCISE if you have any of the following:

- Vaginal Bleeding
- Reduced Foetal Movements
- Serious heart, lung, kidney or thyroid disease
- Poorly controlled Type 1 Diabetes
- History of miscarriage, premature labour, or 'small for dates' baby
- High or low blood pressure
- Placenta Praevia
- Acute Infectious Disease
- Advice not to exercise by your GP or Midwife

Stretching Exercises

Lower and Upper Back Stretch



Start by kneeling with a gym ball. Reach the gym ball as far away from you as possible. Make sure your tailbone is tucked under and then sit down again on your heels. Hold for 10 seconds. Roll the gym ball to the right as shown and hold for 10 seconds. You can put a pillow under your bottom if this is more comfortable.

This exercise can easily be done without the ball with your hands on the mat (make sure you separate your knees slightly to allow space for your bump). Repeat to the left.

Repeat times.

Spine Twist



Sit on a chair or a gym ball. Place your palms together. Rotate as far as you can to the left side. Hold for 5 seconds. Return to the starting position. Repeat to the right side. Repeat times.

Hamstring Stretch



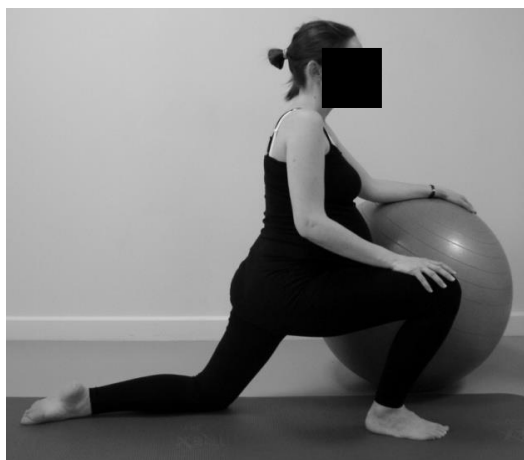
Standing with a gym ball in front of you. Place your hands onto the top of the ball. Roll the ball away from you. Keep your knees and back straight. Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat times.

Buttock Stretch



Start on your hands and knees. Bring one leg in front of you in a cross-legged position. Lean forwards over the front leg. Hold 30 seconds. Repeat on both sides. Repeat times.

Hip Flexor Stretch



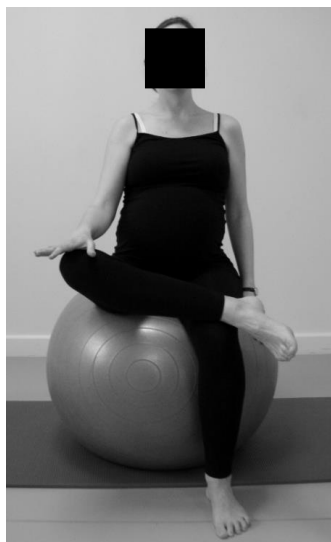
Start kneeling on the floor / mat. Bring one foot in front of you as if about to stand up. Hold onto a gym ball or other support if you wish. Gently transfer your weight forwards over the front leg. Feel the stretch in the front of the hip and thigh of the

kneeling leg. Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat on the other leg. Repeat times.



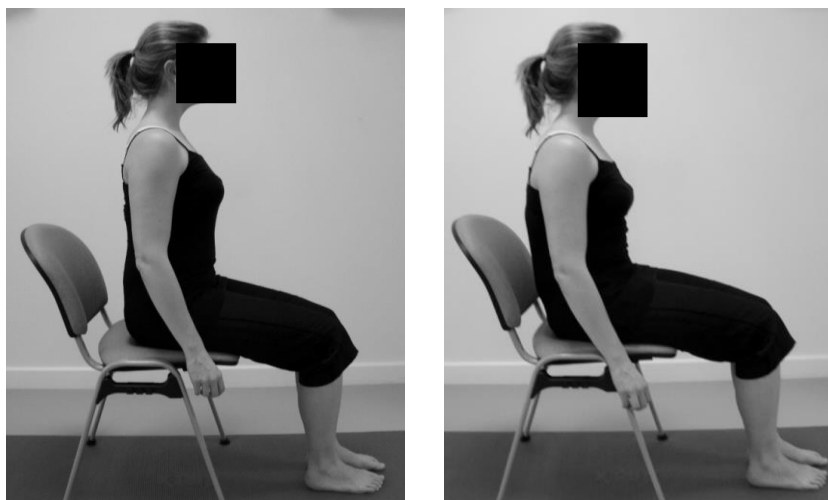
If this is too difficult , this stretch can also be done by standing with a support in front of you and one leg bent towards your bottom and your hand holding your ankle or trousers. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat on each side.

Buttock Stretch On Gym Ball



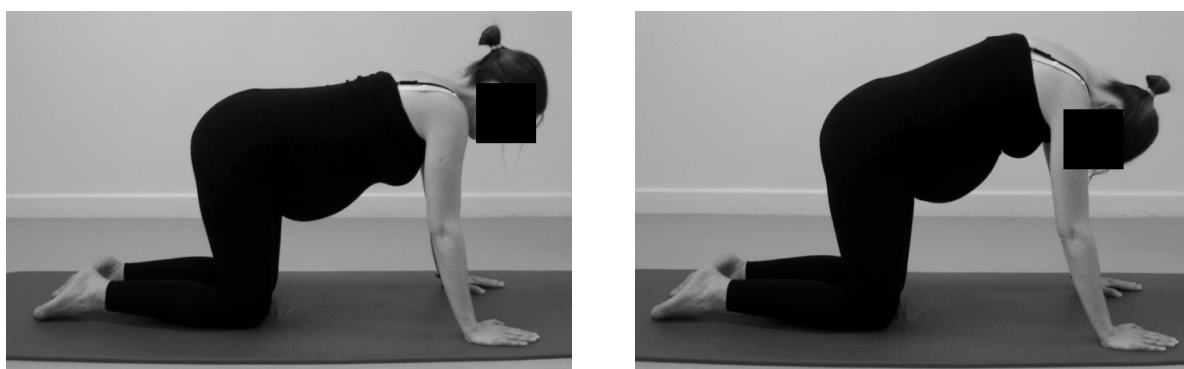
Sitting on a chair or gym ball. Cross one leg over the other as if you were going to sit in a cross-legged position. Push the knee of this leg down towards the floor. Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat on the other side. Repeat times.

Pelvic Tilt



Sitting on a chair or gym ball. Round your lower back and roll your pelvis backwards over your sitting bones. Feel the stretch in your lower back. Return to the starting position. Repeat times.

Cat stretch



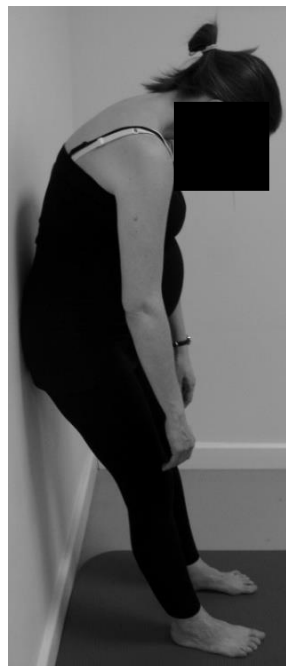
On your hands and knees. Curl your back up towards the ceiling and let your head drop down towards the floor. Return to starting position. Repeat times.

Thread the needle



On your hands and knees. Thread one arm behind the other and reach as far as you can. Return to the starting position. Repeat to the other side. Repeat times.

Roll down from the wall



Start leaning back against a wall with your feet hip-width apart.

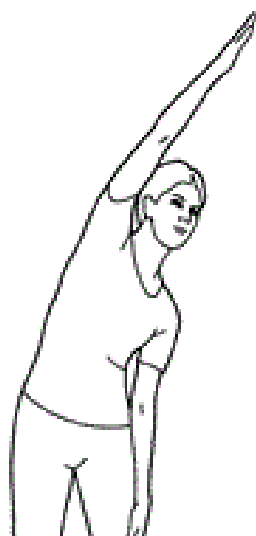
Bend your head forward, then roll forwards from your upper back.

Keep your lower back in contact with the wall.

Hold for a few seconds then roll back up.

Repeat times.

Side Stretch



Start by standing with one arm by your side and one arm straight in the air. Bend your side bringing your arm in the air over your head. Keep your hips straight. Hold 30 seconds

Repeat times.

Calf Stretch



Standing in front of a chair or wall. Step one leg straight behind and bend the front leg. Lean your body forwards until you feel the stretch in the calf of the straight leg. Hold 30 Seconds. Repeat on each side.

Repeat times.



This stretch can also be achieved in sitting or lying with a band or belt wrapped around one foot. Pull on the band/belt to feel the stretch going down the back of the calf and thigh. Hold 30 seconds. Repeat on each side.

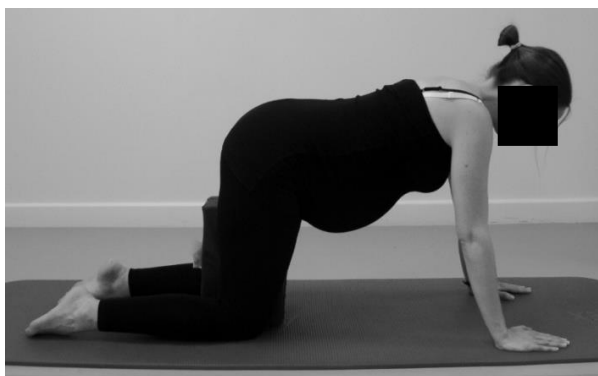
Strengthening Exercises

Deep tummy muscles



Choose a comfortable position. This could be standing, sitting, lying on your side or on hands and knees. Imagine you are wearing a low-slung belt across your hips. Gently draw in the area between your tummy button and pubic bone towards your spine as if you were trying to do the belt up a few more notches. Hold for 5 seconds. Relax. Repeat times. Do not hold your breath while exercising your deep tummy muscles.

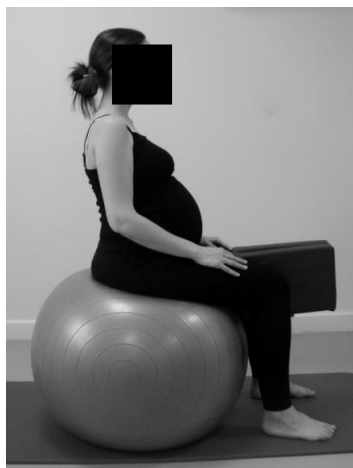
Buttock squeeze



On your hands and knees, squeeze your buttock muscles. If it is more comfortable, place a small cushion or pillow between your thighs. Hold for 5 seconds. Relax. Keep breathing normally

throughout the exercise. Repeat times.

Pillow squeeze



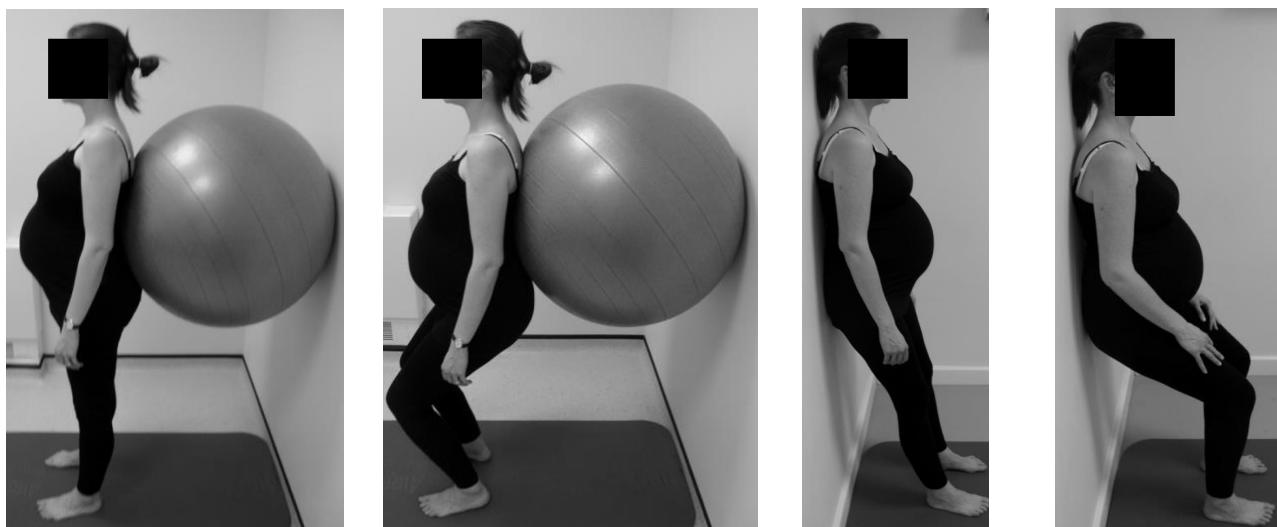
Sit on a chair or a gym ball with your feet hip-width apart. Hold a pillow or rolled-up towel between your knees. Gently squeeze the pillow between your thighs. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat times.

Low to high kneeling



Start in a kneeling position with a gym ball or a chair in front of you. You could also use the sofa or your bed. Rest your arms onto the ball. Push up with your legs into a high kneeling position and squeeze your bottom. Lower back down slowly to the starting position. Repeat times.

Squats against the wall



Leaning against a wall, with or without a gym ball behind your back. Feet hip-width apart. Bend both knees as far as is shown in the pictures. Return to standing position. Repeat times.

Clams



Lying on your side with a pillow between your knees. Feet one on top of the other. Lift the top knee up then lower. Repeat times. Repeat on the other side.

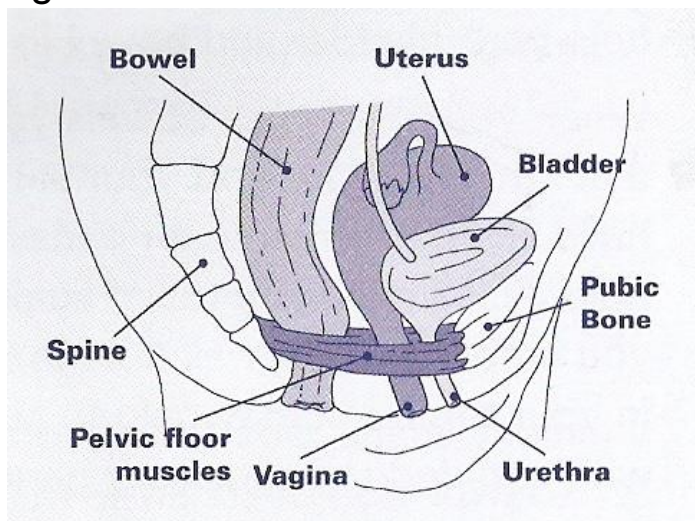
Lift and lower



Lying on your side with legs extended. Lift the top leg and lower. Repeat times. Repeat on the other side.

Pelvic floor muscles

Choose a comfortable position. Breathe in. As you breathe out tighten the muscles around



1. Your bladder opening, as though trying to stop yourself from passing urine
2. Your vagina, as though holding in a tampon, and
3. Around your anal opening, as though trying to stop yourself from passing wind.

Keeping all three openings tightly closed, try to draw them up inside as well - the overall feeling is one of 'squeeze and lift'. This is the basic pelvic floor muscle contraction and there are various ways to perform it as an exercise.

Firstly, see how long you can make each contraction last and how often you can repeat it at any one time. Do this ...x3..... times every day.

Secondly, make each contraction very quick and very powerful then release it immediately; aim for 10 repetitions at a time. Do this ...x3..... times every day.

Finally, to make your muscles work harder, change the position in which you exercise - lying down is easiest, then sitting but eventually try in standing.

Remember! Do not squeeze your buttocks or hold your breath while exercising your pelvic floor muscles.

Contact Information for Barts Health Therapies Department

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Email: wxphysio.outpatients@bartshealth.nhs.uk

Newham University Hospital
Telephone No: 0207 363 8141
Email: TherapyOutpatients.Newham@bartshealth.nhs.uk

For patient information leaflets on other conditions please visit:
www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/physiotherapy

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Please contact us if you need general information or advice about Trust services.
www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/pals

Large print and other languages

For this leaflet in large print, please speak to your clinical team.
For help interpreting this leaflet in other languages, please ring 020 8223 8934.

Te informacje mogą zostać na żądanie przedstawione w formatach alternatywnych, takich jak łatwy do czytania lub duża czcionka, i w różnych językach. Prosimy o kontakt pod numerem 02082238934.

Macluumaadkan waxaa lagu heli karaa qaabab kale, sida akhriska fudud ama daabacaadda wayn, oo waxaa lagu heli karaa luqaddo kale, marka la codsado. Fadlan la xidhiidh 02082238934.

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