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## Tips for exercising during pregnancy and after having a baby

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#### Note:

On our website you will find videos of the exercises:  
Go to [www.gesundheitsfoerderung.ch/fruehe-foerderung](http://www.gesundheitsfoerderung.ch/fruehe-foerderung) and click on  
“**Informationsmaterialien für Eltern**”. You will find all of the videos there.

The exercises are good to do during pregnancy and after having a baby.  
Please be sure to talk to your doctor, gynaecologist or midwife first to check  
if the exercises are good for you.

Are you feeling unwell or in pain? Then stop doing the exercises. If you do not  
feel better, please talk to your midwife, doctor or gynaecologist immediately.  
Health Promotion Switzerland does not accept any responsibility.

# Keeping fit during pregnancy and after giving birth

How can you keep fit during pregnancy and in the first year after your baby is born? This brochure shows you how.

Make time for 20 to 30 minutes of activity each day. The activity should leave you a little out of breath. It will help you to get rid of back ache and leg pain and you will sleep better. If you exercise during pregnancy, it will also help your baby. And after the birth, exercising will help you to get fit again.

Are you already very physically active? Then you can carry on as long as you feel fine.

Are you not very active? Then start with some exercises now. That will be good for you and your baby.

Make sure you sit up straight and stand up straight. Take a deep breath into your belly several times a day. Get active outside every day. Limit the time being sedentary.

Have fun trying out these exercises.

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## Remember:

Drink 300 to 500 ml of fluids while doing the exercises. You can drink water or unsweetened tea (no sugar, sweetener or honey). Tap water in Switzerland tastes good and is hygienic.



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## Tip for the partner

Exercise and activity are good for moms. Make sure your partner takes a short or a longer break 4 to 5 times a week so that she can stay active and do something for herself. You can use the time to look after your baby and get to know him or her better.

# Activities that leave you a little out of breath

## During pregnancy:

**150 minutes per week: moderate intensity.**

It is best to spread this over several days in the week, for example:



Cycling



Brisk walking



Dancing



Swimming or aqua aerobics

## Additionally:



Gentle strength training



Stretching



Pelvic floor exercises

## After giving birth:



Daily walk



Postnatal exercises



Pelvic floor exercises

## Activities to strengthen the pelvic floor:



Daily walk



Gentle strength training



Stretching



Pelvic floor exercises

## Once your pelvic floor is fit again:

**150 minutes per week: moderate intensity.**

It is best to spread this over several days in the week, for example:



Cycling



Brisk walking



Dancing



Swimming or aqua aerobics

or

**75 minutes per week: high intensity.**

It is best to spread this over several days in the week, for example:



Cross-country skiing



Fast cycling



Step aerobics



Hiking uphill

## We recommend:



Pelvic floor exercises

## Additionally:



Gentle strength training



Stretching

# Getting to know your pelvic floor

The pelvic floor muscles are very important during pregnancy and after having a baby. That’s why we are showing you here a pelvic floor exercise that you can easily do in your day-to-day life.

Sit on a hard chair with your back straight. Your feet should be hip-width apart on the floor. That means: the gap between your feet should be around 15 cm. You can place your hands on your belly. Close your eyes. Calmly breathe in and out. How to do the exercise:

1. Take a deep breath.  
Breathe out slowly and tighten the muscles around your body’s three pelvic openings: the anus, vagina and urethra. Imagine you need to stop the flow of urine.
2. Contract your pelvic floor by pulling the muscles around your three pelvic openings in and up.
3. Keep the muscles contracted while you breathe out.
4. Breathe in. Relax your muscles again fully.



Do all of this 10 times. It is best to do this exercise 2 or 3 times a day.



**Tips for your pelvic floor:**

- Keep your back straight when bending down.
- Keep your back straight when lifting things.
- Do you need to sneeze or cough? Then tighten your pelvic floor muscles before you do so.
- Try to relax on the toilet. Don’t strain.
- Keep your back straight when pushing your stroller.



Follow QR code to see the video  
“Introducing the pelvic floor muscles”

# Exercising during pregnancy

If you don't have any problems with your pregnancy, you can exercise as normal. It will not harm your baby.

Physical activity can help you to reduce or get rid of back ache and leg pain. You will sleep better and get fit again faster after your baby is born. And your baby can grow better in the womb.

You can also go hiking. Up to around 2,000 metres above sea level is fine.

You may be unsure whether you are allowed to exercise as normal. If so, ask your doctor, midwife or physiotherapist.

If you like music, you can put on your favourite songs while exercising. Ideally, you should do the exercises 3 or 4 times a week.

Are you feeling unwell or in pain? Then stop doing the exercises. Have a rest. Don't start the exercises again until you feel completely fine.

## Types of sport that are not good during pregnancy:

- Sports where you can easily fall, such as horse-riding or skiing.
- Team sports where you can easily collide with other people, such as volleyball or floorball.
- Deep-sea diving

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## Warm up

1. Stand with your feet hip-width apart and your back straight. Imagine there is a string attached to the top of your head that is pulling you up straight.
2. March on the spot: do 100 steps. This will take about 1 minute.
3. At the same time, move your arms at right angles as though running. Keep breathing calmly.
4. March another 100 steps on the spot. This time, lift your knees up as high as possible.
5. To finish, shake out your legs.




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## Strengthen your legs

1. Stand with your feet hip-width apart and your hands on your hips.
2. Step forward with your right foot.
3. Let your shoulders relax, and breathe in and out calmly.
4. Bend your knees and stand up again. Remain with one foot forward.



Do this exercise 10 times. Then repeat the exercise with your left foot forward.

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### Strengthen your back

1. Stand with your feet hip-width apart, toes and knees facing forward.
2. Bend your knees slightly.
3. Lean your upper body forward slightly. Don't arch your back. Make sure you keep it straight. Keep your neck in line with your spine.
4. Fold your forearms in front of your chest.
5. Throughout the exercise, focus your eyes on one spot on the floor, about 2 metres in front of your feet.
6. Lift your folded arms up to your forehead. While doing so, pull your shoulders down.
7. Lower your arms back in front of your chest.
8. Continue breathing calmly.

Do this exercise 10 times. To finish, shake out your arms and legs.



### Strengthen your pelvic floor

1. Get down on all fours.
2. Your knees should be hip-width apart and the tops of your feet on the floor.
3. Your hands should be directly beneath your shoulders.
4. Look at the floor. Calmly breathe in and out. Keep your belly relaxed and your back straight.
5. As you breathe out: tighten the muscles around your anus, vagina and urethra. Pull the three pelvic openings in and up. Keep your back straight.
6. As you breathe in: relax your belly, keeping your back straight.

Do this exercise 10 times.



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### Move your spine

1. Sit cross-legged on the floor or sit on a chair.
2. Imagine there is a string attached to the top of your head that is pulling you up straight. Keep your shoulders relaxed.
3. Twist your upper body to the left.
4. Look backwards over your left shoulder. While doing so, support yourself with your left hand behind your back.
5. Place your right hand on your left knee. Hold this position for a moment.
6. Slowly twist back and continue turning to the right side. Do the same stretch on this side.

Do the exercise 3 times on each side.

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Follow QR code to see the video  
"Fitness during pregnancy"

# Feeling your pelvic floor after having a baby

Congratulations on the birth of your baby or babies! Now it's time for you to recover. Go for a walk outside with your baby or babies every day.

Even just one day after the birth, you can start trying to feel your pelvic floor. It doesn't matter what kind of delivery you had: all women can do these exercises, even after a caesarean. We recommend doing these exercises every day.

## Feel your pelvic floor muscles

Lie on your back and place your feet on the floor. Place your hands on your belly and close your eyes. Calmly breathe in and out.

1. Breathe in. Let your breath flow into your belly.
2. Breathe out slowly. While doing so, gently contract the muscles around your anus and vagina.
3. Breathe in. Relax and release your pelvic floor again.
4. Continue until you have breathed out 10 times and breathed in 10 times.
5. Take a short break and drink some water or unsweetened tea.

Do this whole exercise with 10 breaths 3 times in total.



At first, you may not feel your pelvic floor muscles contract. Keep doing the exercises every day anyway. After a while, you will feel your muscles moving.

## Lie on your belly and relax

Lie on the floor with a cushion under your belly. Breathe in deeply into your belly and out through your mouth for 10 to 15 minutes. Do this exercise 2 or 3 times a day.



Do you want to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles? First, you have to be able to feel your pelvic floor. Every woman reaches this point at a different time. You might not know if you can start strengthening your pelvic floor yet. If so, you should wait and ask your doctor or gynaecologist at your 6-week check-up after the birth or ask your midwife.



Follow QR code to see the video  
"Perception of the pelvic floor after delivery"



# Strengthening your pelvic floor after having a baby

Once you can feel your pelvic floor muscles again, you can start strengthening your pelvic floor. These exercises will also help you to strengthen your belly and back muscles. Try to do these exercises on as many days as possible each week.

Are you feeling unwell or in pain? If so, talk to your doctor, midwife or physiotherapist.

## Warm up

1. Warm up before doing the exercises.  
Dance along to your favourite song.



## Contract your pelvic floor muscles

Get down on all fours. Breathe calmly.

1. As you breathe out: round your back. Look down. Tighten the muscles around your anus and vagina. Imagine that you are pulling your vagina up towards your navel.
2. As you breathe in: stretch your back and neck until they are in a straight line. Relax your pelvic floor muscles.
3. Continue until you have breathed out and in 10 times.

Take a little break. Shake out your shoulders and hips.

Then repeat the exercise. Shake out your arms and wrists.



### Strengthen your pelvic floor

1. Lie down on your left side. Lay your head comfortably on your left arm.
2. Pull your knees up to form a right angle.
3. Press your heels together. Keep your heels together throughout the exercise.
4. Lift your waist up a little off the floor. Keep your pelvis on the floor. Your waist should not touch the floor during the exercise.
5. Tighten the muscles around your anus and vagina. Pull your pelvic floor in and up.
6. Breathe out: slowly move your right knee upwards.
7. Breathe in: keep your knee in the air. Keep tightening the muscles around your anus and vagina. Keep contracting your pelvic floor as well.
8. Breathe out again: lower your right knee again. Once your knees are back together, relax your pelvic floor muscles.
9. Do this exercise 10 times.

Next, turn onto your right side and repeat the exercise with your left knee.



Follow QR code to see the video  
 “Strengthening the pelvic floor muscles after delivery”



### Stretch your back

1. Get down on all fours.
2. Your knees should be hip-width apart and the tops of your feet on the floor.
3. Move your bottom backwards until you are sitting back on your heels.
4. Lower your head onto the floor between your outstretched arms. This will stretch your back.
5. Hold this position for a little while. Relax and breathe gently in and out.
6. Stand up slowly. Shake out your arms and legs.



# Getting fit

Have you strengthened your pelvic floor again since having a baby? And do you feel fit and well? Then you can slowly start to do some exercises again.

It is good for your health to start slowly with the exercises: don't do too many to begin with. Over time, you can start to do more. The goal is to do 150 minutes of moderate activity per week.

Keep doing your pelvic floor exercises as well. Take care when exercising your belly muscles. You shouldn't feel any pressure on your pelvic floor or in your belly.

Any kind of physical activity will help you to reach a healthy body weight.

Ideally, you should do the following exercises 3 or 4 times a week.

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## Walk briskly

1. Keeping your back straight, push your stroller for around 10 minutes at a moderate speed. Are you a little out of breath? That's good!
2. Find a good place to do your exercises.




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## Squats with your stroller

1. Stand behind the stroller with your feet hip-width apart. Hold the handle of the stroller. Make sure you keep your back straight throughout the exercise.
2. Breathe in. As you do so, bend your knees. Push the stroller away from you slightly while doing this.
3. Breathe out. As you do so, tighten the muscles around your anus and vagina. Stand up and pull the stroller back towards you.

Do this exercise 10 times.



### Strengthen your back

1. Put your stroller brakes on so it doesn't roll away.
2. Take one step back from the stroller. Stand with your feet hip-width apart and bend your knees.
3. Push your bottom backwards. Stretch your arms up at an angle, next to your ears.
4. Don't arch your back. Make sure you keep it straight. Keep your neck in line with your spine.
5. Continue breathing calmly. Your hands should be above the handle of the stroller. Hold this position for 5 seconds.
6. Lift your right arm up a little and then your left arm. Keep breathing calmly. Your upper body should be straight.

Do the exercise 10 times with each arm.



Follow QR code to see the video  
"Getting physically active after delivery"

### Strengthen the muscles in your back and legs

1. Stand behind the stroller with your feet hip-width apart.
2. Lean your upper body forward slightly. Keep your neck and back in a straight line.
3. Rest both hands lightly on the handle of the stroller for support.
4. Breathe in: raise your left leg behind you, bent at the knee.
5. Breathe out: lower your leg again. Don't put your foot down on the floor, but keep it up in the air.
6. Do this exercise slowly 10 times. Take a little break, but don't put your foot on the floor.
7. Then do this exercise another 10 times.

Change legs: now stand on your left foot and raise your right leg behind you, bent at the knee. Repeat the whole exercise with this leg. To finish, shake out your arms and legs.



### Continue walking

Next, walk quickly for another 10 minutes.

This should leave you a little out of breath.



### Information for parents

- Information for pregnant women and parents with young children [www.gesundheitsfoerderung.ch/fruehe-foerderung](http://www.gesundheitsfoerderung.ch/fruehe-foerderung)
- Information for pregnant women: a booklet that explains everything in pictures and without words <https://www.gesund-ins-leben.de/inhalt/heft-ohne-worte-fuer-schwangere-31105.html>
- Exercise tips for adults [www.hepa.ch](http://www.hepa.ch)
- Exercise tips: your baby or young child needs exercise. You can help your little one with this. This booklet contains tips for parents with children aged up to 6 years. [www.gesundheitsfoerderung.ch/paprica-bewegungstipps](http://www.gesundheitsfoerderung.ch/paprica-bewegungstipps)
- Nutrition: babies and young children need healthy food. On this website, you can find tips on healthy eating ideas for your child. <https://kinderandentisch.ch>

### Organizations offering courses or advice for pregnant women and parents:

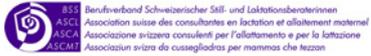
- [www.physioswiss.ch](http://www.physioswiss.ch)
- [www.bgb-schweiz.ch](http://www.bgb-schweiz.ch)
- [www.pelvisuisse.ch](http://www.pelvisuisse.ch)
- [www.beckenboden.com](http://www.beckenboden.com)
- [www.buggyfit.ch](http://www.buggyfit.ch)

### App with exercises for strengthening the pelvic floor after giving birth

INSELhealth – mama care (German and English)



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