

# EARLY POSTNATAL PILATES STRATEGY



## 5 KEY EXERCISES TO GENTLY KICK-START YOUR RECOVERY



## Ready to recover?

*By Tracy Ward I Freshly Centered*

The postnatal stage is a complex, consuming journey that brings so much joy, but can also be a place of overwhelm and you may find yourself last in line.

If you could make your recovery fit in with your new lifestyle and know that you are working on yourself from the very beginning, imagine how much better you could feel and how much more effective your rehabilitation could be.

Would you want to know exactly how to begin your pelvic floor and core muscle activations? Specifically which key exercises you could benefit from right now? And how to make these fit easily in to the chaos of caring for a newborn baby at the same time?

**I've got you covered!**

**The Early Postnatal Pilates Strategy covers all this in simple, easy steps that will fit into your day. Right now.**

### POSTNATAL RECOVERY PROCESS

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### PELVIC FLOOR & CORE MUSCLE ACTIVATION

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### 5 KEY POSTNATAL EXERCISES FOR RECOVERY

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### WHEN TO COMPLETE YOUR EXERCISES

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### FURTHER POSTNATAL RESOURCES

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## Hi, I'm Tracy Ward, founder of Freshly Centered-

I help postnatal women restore their core, optimise their strength and feel good postpartum.

I do this by educating, inspiring, and showing you exactly how to approach your postnatal care the right way. I created The Postnatal Pilates Guide to consolidate ALL of this information in one place!

This **Early Postnatal Pilates Strategy** provides you with 5 key exercises you can start straight away to enhance your postnatal recovery without over-doing it or creating pressure to “bounce back”.

## Your postnatal recovery

The postnatal period is a time for resting, recovering, and finding your feet amongst the unpredictability of newborn life. A simple plan to commence your recovery can be empowering and provide positivity in this transitional stage.

Your postnatal recovery can begin at any stage you feel ready. The steps are simple yet effective and you can follow this plan:

### 1. Lay the foundations

Focus on the very basics of pelvic floor and core abdominal muscle contractions. Learn how to complete these properly and how to do this with a good breathing technique.

### 2. Practise good form with basic movements

Learn how to do the basic movements correctly, or re-learn how to move well whilst applying the foundations from above simultaneously.

### 3. Low impact activity

Carefully resume low impact activity at a pace that is comfortable for you, with good movement form and applying your foundations from above.

### 4. Higher impact activity

Move in to higher impact activity or increased endurance of lower impact activity. This should be a gradual transition that puts steps 1-3 in practise throughout and ensures quality is not compromised when high impact activity is added.

## GET STARTED

Effective rehab begins at the very beginning. Laying the foundations is the key to effectively progressing your strength and ensuring the best recovery long-term.

You may find pelvic floor & core exercises difficult initially, but It is important that you still attempt them as the muscles will become more responsive the more you stimulate them and they will gradually get stronger.



## Pelvic floor activation

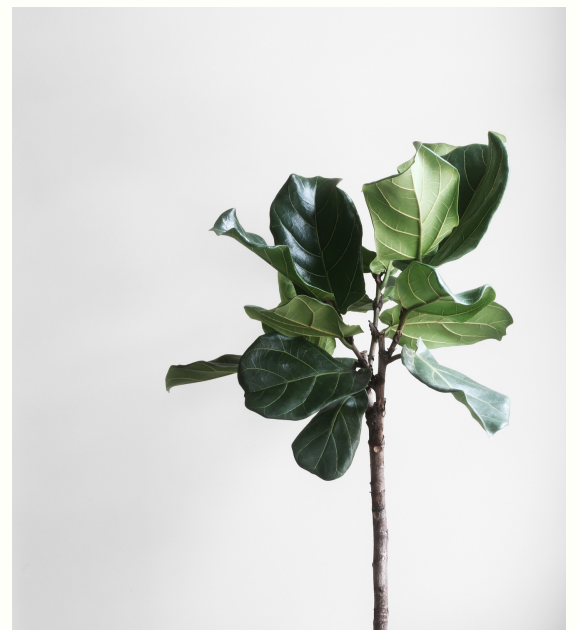
Sit down on a chair and be aware of your pelvic floor against the chair underneath you.

Think about lifting away from the chair. Start from your back passage, draw the pelvic floor muscles upwards and forwards towards your front passage. Perform a set of both slow contractions and fast contractions, and repeat 3-5 times per day.

## Core muscle engagement

This exercise is best done initially lying down with hips and knees bent. Place your fingertips on the front hip bony prominences at either side of your pelvis. Move your fingertips down one inch and inwards one inch so that you are in your lower abdominal region.

- Breathe in, then breathe out.
- Before you take your next breathe in, gently draw these abdominal muscles inwards away from your fingertips about 30% of your maximum, as if your belt was on a little too tight and it is drawing the hip bones towards each other.
- Hold briefly, then relax. Repeat x10.
- Gradually build up to being able to hold this for 10 seconds.



**PERSEVERE DAILY  
&  
BE PATIENT!**



# YOUR 5 KEY POSTNATAL EXERCISES



## 1) Pelvic tilt

Sit upright on the edge of a chair. Place your hands on your hips. Gently roll your pelvis forwards as if you were going to tip off the edge of the chair. Your back will arch.

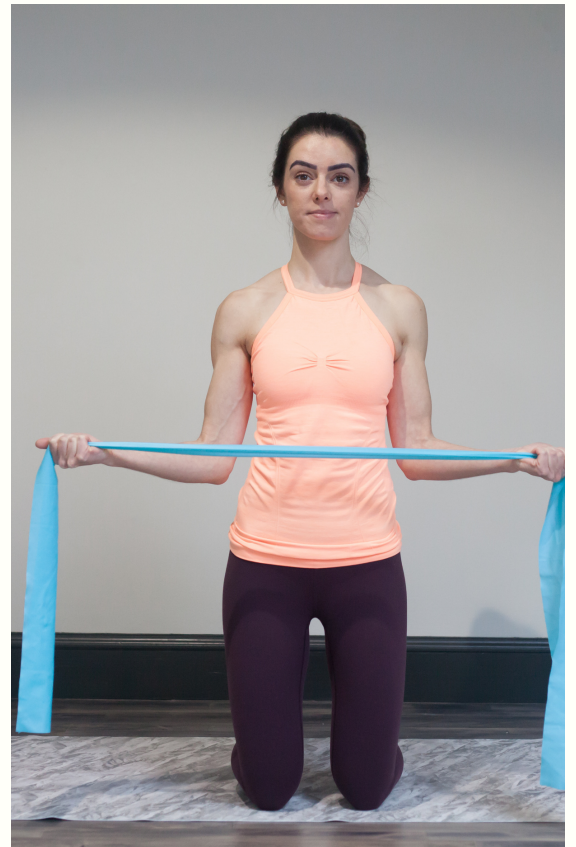
Then roll your pelvis backwards as if to tuck your tailbone underneath. Your back will flex in to a C-curve shape.

Continue to alternate between tilting forwards and backwards. Engage your core and pelvic floor throughout the exercise.

## 2) Dumb waiter

Sit upright on a chair. Draw your shoulder blades slightly back and down, widening your collar bones, and lift through your breastbone. Bring your elbows to your waist, bent to 90 degrees with palms facing upwards.

Open the forearms outwards as far as able. Feel your shoulder blades gently drawing towards each other as the forearms open further. Return to the start and repeat.



## EXERCISE TIPS

Aim to complete 8-10 repetitions of each, if able.  
Gradually build up to completing 2-3 sets.

Don't compromise on technique though so do less if you need to, to ensure quality is maintained.

Engage core and pelvic floor prior to commencing each exercise. Try to maintain this throughout the exercises.

Remember to release pelvic floor & core in between sets.





### 3) Arm openings

Sit upright on a chair. Draw your shoulder blades slightly back and down, widening your collar bones, and lift through your breastbone. Raise both arms out in front of you, shoulder width apart. Relax shoulders down from your ears. Keep one arm static at the front as you open the other arm out to the side. Rotate round from your trunk as far as able, then return to the start. Repeat to the other side.

### 4) Squats

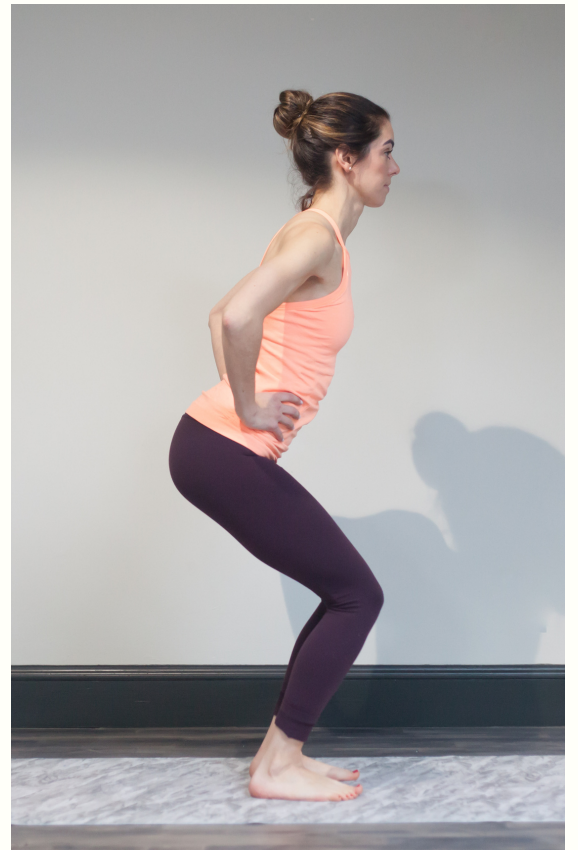
From a standing position with equal weight on each leg, engage your pelvic floor and core, lean slightly forwards, and send your hips back behind you to squat down.

Maintain the space between your legs so that your hip, knee, and ankle remain in alignment.

Keep your core engaged, lift up through pelvic floor, and squeeze your buttocks to return to the standing position again.

### 5) Hip twist

Draw your knees together. Gently roll them off to one side, moving from your core (exhale). Pause, use your core to bring the legs back to the start, starting with your core engagement, the trunk, the pelvis, and then your knees (inhale).





## When to complete your exercises

- Fit these in around your daily life.  
*E.g.* any time you are sitting down, after meal times, after feeding baby.
- Just before you go to bed, or when you wake in the morning.
- As a mini workout at any stage during your day when you have 5-10 minutes.
- Set a reminder on your phone, or link them to a regular activity for continuity such as eating lunch or after showering.

## When you're ready

1. Read more on postnatal exercise & care in my [postnatal blog category](#).
2. Try some of my free [postnatal Pilates Videos](#)
3. Subscribe to my [mailing list](#) to be kept up-to-date with all of my offerings
4. Get all the information you need on safely & effectively returning to exercise, as well as a 6-week progressive Pilates plan to follow in [The Postnatal Pilates Guide](#).

*I can't wait to support you through your postnatal recovery and help you return to what you love the right way!*

**Tracy**



## TRACY'S MESSAGE

Take your time and be kind to yourself.  
The early postnatal stage is not a time to rush your recovery or return to exercise too intensely .  
Rehab should never be painful, over-strenuous, or leave you feeling worse mentally or physically.

If you are experiencing any pain, bleeding, or incontinence please contact a Women's Health or Pre/Postnatal Physiotherapist for individual advice.

**Wishing you the best recovery & time with your new baby!**