



RETURN TO EXERCISE POSTPARTUM

Building a Strong Foundation



DR. RACHEL MOORE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 ABOUT THE AUTHOR
- 2 INTRODUCTION
- 3 SIGNS TO BE AWARE OF CONING 101
- 4 WEEKS 0-1
- 5 BREATH WORK
- 6 WEEKS 2-6
- 7 THE CORE EXPLAINED
- 8 TRANSVERSE ABDOMINAL MUSCLES
- 9 PISTON BREATHING
- 10 ADVANCED TRANSVERSE ABDOMINAL WORK
- 11 PRACTICE IN STANDING
- 12 BODY AWARENESS
- 13 HIP WORK
- 14 BABY SQUATS
- 15 CONCLUSION

About the Author



Dr. Rachel Moore, PT cert-CMFA

I am the owner of Disrupt Physiotherapy. I received my Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology from the University of North Texas in 2014, and went on to earn my Doctorate of Physical Therapy from University of North Texas Health Science Center in 2017. Since graduating with my DPT, I have taken numerous courses in clinical management of fitness athletes, pregnancy and postpartum fitness, as well as manual therapy and dry needling courses to further my specialization.

I have been doing Crossfit a little over two years now, following a 5 year solo gym routine that grew tiring. I enjoy working with Crossfitters, and being able to provide care to a population that is fairly underserved in the modern medical model, frequently being told to "just stop doing Crossfit". The friendships I have made and the community I have found within my own box mean the world to me. I am dedicated to keeping athletes in their own gyms and communities as well, rather than being forced to take time out due to injury.

As a recent first time Mom, it has been baffling to me how few resources there were available to me to stay active during pregnancy, as well as reintroducing exercise postpartum. I am proud to have a background in pregnancy and postpartum athleticism in addition to my physical therapy training in order to help women stay healthy and active throughout all phases of motherhood. Working with postpartum women and helping guide them in their return to activity has quickly become one of my favorite parts of the day.



No matter where you are in your pregnancy and postpartum journey, I look forward to being able to help you do the things that matter most to you!

INTRODUCTION

Every woman's birth story is different. If you line 5 women up and ask them to tell their story, odds are you would hear a variety of experiences—was she induced? Did she have an epidural or not? How long did she push? Was there tearing, or no tearing? These all contribute to a woman's recovery postpartum. Our recovery journey is just as unique as our pregnancy and delivery!

The general guidelines are for women to expect to be "cleared" to return to exercise following their six week postpartum check up. Why six weeks? Generally, soft tissue affected by labor may have healed by then. However, that does not mean we are ready to jump in to exercising as we were prior to becoming pregnant.

Think about the journey your body has just been through—for 9 months, it has grown and adapted in order to provide a nurturing environment for your little one. Your anatomy has shifted in order to accommodate a growing baby. Your pelvis may have widened, your posture has changed to adapt to a shifting center of gravity. Your pelvic floor muscles have supported the weight of baby. Then, during labor, your body has been through a marathon. Regardless of how long you labor, or your method of delivery, there are significant physical demands associated with giving birth. Many women find themselves sore all over, understandably so! If you deliver via cesarean, it can be easy to brush over the fact that you just underwent a major abdominal surgery.

As beautiful as it is, birth is traumatic to our bodies. We have to respect that our body will need time to heal. When we sprain our ankle, pull a hamstring, or tear our ACL, we don't expect to take a few weeks completely off of activity for 6 weeks and then jump right back in to running again, like nothing ever happened. Usually, there is a period of easing back in to an exercise routine. Because we don't blatantly see our pelvic floor every day, it is easy to forget that the muscles and soft tissue there were injured and need time to heal and recover.

While this ebook serves as a resource to women with general guidelines for returning to exercise postpartum, it is not made to be a one size fits all rehabilitative program, or serve as medical advice. If you are struggling with abdominal or pelvic symptoms postpartum, or any other musculoskeletal pain, I urge you to seek out the help of a physical therapist. Being a new mom is tough-adjusting to your new life may seem impossible. Don't allow musculoskeletal pain to be a contributing factor to an already difficult time.

Signs To Be Aware Of

One of the best ways to know if you are overdoing it when returning to exercise is to know what you **SHOULD NOT** be experiencing. If you experience any of the following during or after exercising, it is an indication you may need to regress the exercise:



Hip, tailbone, low back pain



Increased urge to urinate or urinary leakage



Pelvic fullness, discomfort or increase of bleeding



Coning of linea alba, the connective tissue between your abdominal muscles



Headache not relieved by medication, blurred vision or “floaters”, dizziness/light headedness, or pain in upper right abdomen

STOP exercise and contact healthcare professional if you experience the following:

WEEKS 0-1

First of all, this is the time for you to begin to adjust to your new life as a Momma. Sleep is incredibly limited during this time, and stress may be high while learning how to get a handle on nursing and learning your baby's cues. It is OKAY to NOT do anything at this point! Your body is absolutely still in recovery mode, and giving your body the things it needs to heal are huge right now. The key factors of this stage are:

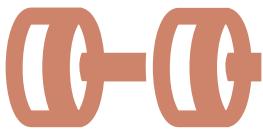
 REST while you can—nap while baby naps, talk with your partner about nighttime scheduling if possible



Give yourself grace—know that this time is an adjustment period. We don't just come home and magically become pros at this whole mom thing! It WILL get easier!



Practice breath work. There are three positions to begin practicing breath work in, detailed on the next page



Here's the thing, I can't tell you "at week 3, do these exercises". No generalized exercise program can, because what one woman is ready for at week 3 may be drastically different than what another woman is ready for at week 3. What I can give you is background knowledge and a general road map, with progressions and building blocks for foundational movements. These exercises may be able to be performed early on in the postpartum period only if they do not elicit symptoms listed in the beginning of this ebook.

Core Work

- Piston Breathing
- Transverse Abdominal Marches
- Transverse Abdominal Leg Slides
- Counter Press Downs

Hip Work

- Bridges
- Clamshells
- Sidelying Leg Raises
- Baby Squats

Body Awarness

- Cat/Cow,
- Standing Pelvic Tilt

Transverse Abdominal Muscles

What are the transverse abdominal muscles?

Muscles that wrap around your torso, similar to a corset. They are underneath what we typically think of as our “six pack abs”. They can be tricky to engage, especially after pregnancy due to being in an altered length tension relationship for so long. To feel for the contraction of these muscles, find the bony part at the front of your hip bone. Then, slide your fingers towards your belly button 2 inches, keeping your fingers flat.



The first way I like to teach where this muscle is is with an isometric press down. When we press down with our arms against a static surface, it helps to automatically kick on our ab muscles

Hooklying Isometric Press Down

Bring your hip to 90 degrees with your knee bent.

Place your palm on top of your knee, and press down into your knee with your arm.

Your knee should not move. You should feel a muscle in your lower abdomen engage.



After you have gotten the hang of where these muscles are and what it feels like for them to fire, the next step is to incorporate this in to your breathing.

Practice In Standing



Counter Press Downs

Stand in front of a counter (or chair back) that is about waist height, a little less than one arms length away from the counter. Keeping your elbows straight, place your hands on the counter palms down. Inhale, allowing your belly to fill with air and your pelvic floor to relax. As you exhale, gently press down into the counter, engage your lower abdominal muscles, and imagine elevating your pelvic floor.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST!

For more detailed information about the anatomy of the core and pelvic floor, the application of anatomy, and instructions and photos of exercises, please visit www.disruptphysio.com to purchase the full Return to Exercise Postpartum: Building a Strong Foundation ebook