


Alana Physiotherapy



Prenatal Physiotherapy Guide

Congratulations!

Having a baby is such an exciting time and there are so many amazing changes happening in your body. This guide is designed to help you develop strength and mobility to cope with the demands of pregnancy and the post-natal period and help restore your pelvic floor.

Strength

Mums need to be strong! Not only for the labour ahead but once baby arrives (think lifting prams out of cars and bending to put babies in cots!). Below are a few exercises you can do to get strong in your pregnancy and they are great to continue once baby arrives.

Mobility

In pregnancy your changing body shape can cause stiffness and general aches and pains - around 80% of women get back or pelvic pain in their pregnancy. In the post-natal period the sustained postures required for feeding and caring for your baby can also make you feel stiff and sore. These are some of my favourite exercises to keep your spine happy in pregnancy and beyond.

Pelvic floor

The pelvic floor muscles are working hard in your pregnancy to support you, will show amazing flexibility in a vaginal delivery (this muscle can stretch up to 3 times its own length!) and will need some help to recover in the postnatal period. In this guide we look at what the pelvic floor muscles do, and how you can help them recover following your delivery.

STRENGTH

Rows

Sitting on top of your sit bones with a nice straight spine (knees bent). Keeping the elbows bent to 90 degrees and your neck relaxed pull the band backwards, squeezing your shoulder blades together. **2-3 sets of 10**



Biceps curls

Sitting on top of your sit bones with a nice straight spine (knees bent). Bring the elbows up to 45 degrees in front of you. Without letting your elbows drop down (imagine they are resting on a shelf) bend and straighten them to work your biceps. Keep your shoulders away from your ears. **2-3 sets of 10**



Squats

Stand with your feet hip width apart and tie your band around your knees. Keeping a nice neutral spine hinge backwards from the hips into a squat and pull the band slightly apart with your knees. **3 sets of 10**



Bird dog

Start on all fours with your knees under your hips and hands under your shoulders. Breathe in to prepare. As you exhale pull your baby in towards your spine and stretch out the left leg behind you (keeping the toe on the floor), and the right arm up in front at shoulder height (elbow straight). Focus on keeping your spine long and your neck relaxed as an extension of your spine. Breathe in to return, and then exhale to stretch out on the opposite sides. **Repeat x 10 on each side (alternating)**



M O B I L I T Y

Thread the needle

Start on all fours with knees under hips and hands under shoulders. Take a deep breath in and rotate your left hand up to the ceiling keeping both arms straight. Push through your right hand to help you rotate. Breathe all the way out as you rotate back and stretch the left hand under the right shoulder and to the floor. Only have a slight bend in the right elbow. Feel the stretch through your rib cage.

Repeat 10 times on the left, the 10 times on the right.



Cat / Cow

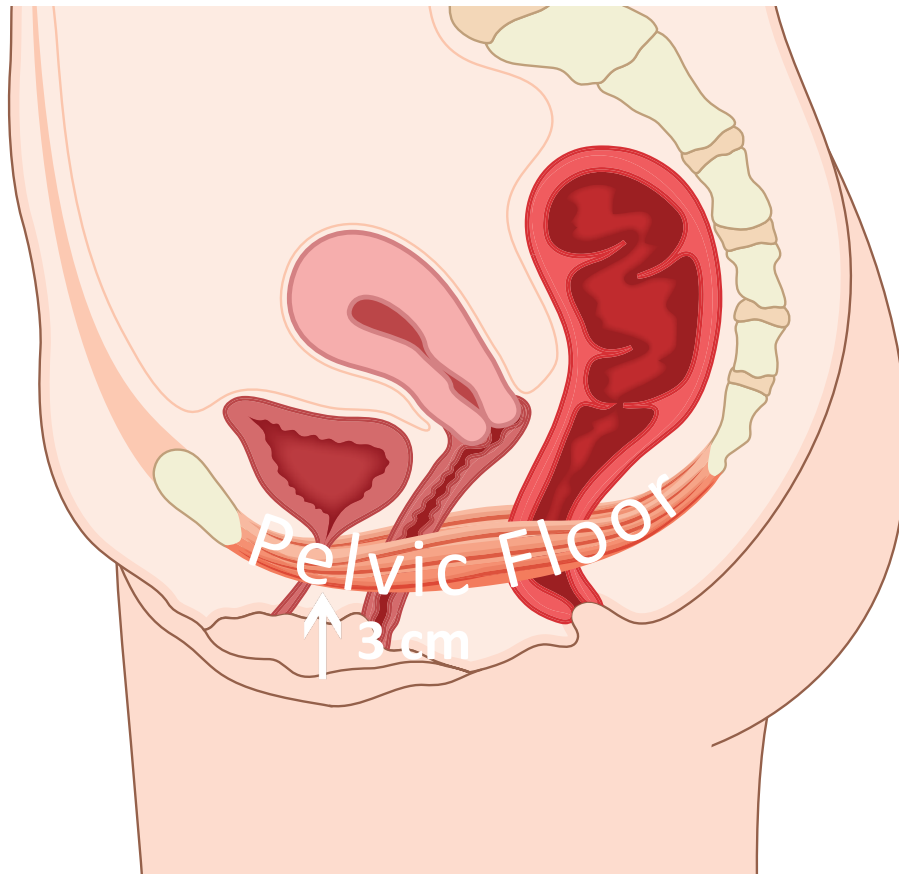
Start on all fours with knees under hips and hands under shoulders. Curl up into cat stretch by tucking your bottom and head under and stretching your thoracic spine up (imagine you are trying to touch your bra strap to the ceiling). Breathe deeply as you slowly move into cow stretch where your bottom and head tilt up towards the ceiling and your chest stretches down (Imagine you are dropping your bra strap to the floor).

Repeat 10 times, breathing deeply into your ribs and keeping your abdomen nice and relaxed.



PELVIC FLOOR STRENGTHENING

Your deep pelvic floor sits about 3 cm inside and attaches from the pubic bone all the way back to the tailbone. These muscles are important for increasing core strength, preventing prolapse and stopping bladder and bowel leaks.



Activation

You need to work your pelvic floor muscle all the way from back to front. Imagine you were picking up a marble with your anus, lifting it up through the vagina and all the way to your belly button. It's important to then relax all the way back down again. Another way to think of it is to hold wind inside, hold urine inside and lift up.

POSTNATAL PELVIC FLOOR PROGRAM

If you have had a vaginal delivery your pelvic floor will need some TLC to get it back to full strength. The sooner you can start the better - Day 1 after your delivery is great if you can! Here is a basic protocol for you to follow in the busy postnatal period.

Week 1	1 second hold x 10 every time you feed your baby in the daytime
Week 2	2 second hold x 10 every time you feed your baby in the daytime
Week 3	3 second hold x 10 every time you feed your baby in the daytime
Week 6	Here you will have your 6 week postnatal check with your obstetrician. You are aiming for a 6 second x 10 contraction! You might be referred to physiotherapy if your doctor thinks you need some extra help
Week 10	10 second hold x 10 every time you feed your baby in the daytime



Ruth Schubert
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About Ruth....

Ruth is a specialist women's health and musculoskeletal physiotherapist who is passionate about maternal health. With over 16 years clinical experience, Ruth believes that providing women with the latest evidence-based and best practice physiotherapy treatment can empower them to make informed decisions and thrive in their pregnancy and the postnatal period.

We hope this guide encourages you to stay active in your pregnancy and remain committed to your pelvic floor rehab in the postnatal period. The Alana Physiotherapy team look forward to working with you at this special time.



About Alana....

At Alana, our goal is simple: To provide health care and medical expertise of the highest standard to women of any age.

Established in 2007, Alana Healthcare for Women is built around a deep understanding of the gynaecological, obstetric and fertility needs of the women of Sydney and beyond. This means we have created a team consisting of the best gynaecologists, obstetricians, fertility specialists and physiotherapists in Sydney, providing care in a way that is unique and unlike anything you've experienced before. You'll see this reflected not only in our doctors, physiotherapists and naturopaths, but also in our administrative and support team.

Your care really is our number one priority.

For more information please visit **www.alanahealthcare.com.au**.

DIRECTORS

Jason Abbott
Minke Burke
Erin Nesbitt-Hawes

ROOMS

48-50 St Pauls Street
Randwick NSW 2031
ABN 99 123 335 259

MAIL

PO BOX 3353
St Pauls NSW 2031

CONTACT

T 02 9009 5255 **F** 9009 5244
reception@alanahealthcare.com.au
www.alanahealthcare.com.au