

## POST-PARTUM RETURN TO SPINNING®

**Sitting on a bike seat may be the last thing on your mind after giving birth, but exercising—in whatever form you're comfortable with—will help you recover more quickly.**

The rapid physical and emotional changes that occur in the post-partum period create special circumstance and changing needs. Keeping the following things in mind will help to smooth the transition from pregnancy to the nonpregnant state.

### Physiologic changes after childbirth:

- Tissues and ligaments around the uterus, abdomen, back, pelvis, hips and knees begin to involute and shorten due to the withdrawal of pregnancy hormones.
- If breast feeding, ovarian function is diminished producing side effects similar to menopause, including cessation of menstruation, hot flashes, vaginal dryness, dry skin, bone mineral loss and emotional instability.
- Breastfeeding can increase breast tissue, creating a dramatic change in the need for proper breast stabilization and support.
- Incisional discomfort (C-section) or pelvic floor tenderness (vaginal delivery).
- Potential for dehydration if breastfeeding is not balanced with appropriate fluid intake.

### Psychological concerns after childbirth:

- Increase role demands.
- Irregular sleep patterns.

- Emotional instability due to hormonal fluctuations.
- Stress of life changing event.

### Tips on returning to exercise:

The time to return to exercise is different for each new mother. Some women report resuming light workouts within two weeks after giving birth. The key is a slow progressive return, working up to 3-5 workouts a week before increasing intensity and duration. Some of the positive effects of pregnancy like increased stroke volume and heat dissipation can effectively stay with women after delivery and ultimately improve performance.

- Start slow with low to moderate intensity exercise.
- Consider your personal well-being. If the activity is to mentally or physically stressful, pull back a little. The first six weeks after delivery the goal is to find a routine that promotes balance for the mind and body.
- Be sure to hydrate adequately and eat well. The quality of breast milk is directly linked to the quality of the mother's nutritional status. Monitor hydration by monitoring your urine. The lighter in color your urine, the better hydrated you are.
- Rest as much as possible.
- Don't ignore pain or fatigue; these are signals that the body is overwhelmed.
- As a general rule, the type of exercise activity will be dictated by

listening to your body. Taking a Spinning class in the first few weeks after delivery may not be an option due to pelvic floor tenderness or a healing episiotomy. Begin with another cardiovascular activity until healing is complete. Moderate weight training and flexibility exercise are appropriate during this time, as well.

- Provide adequate support for breasts—double your sports bra if necessary.
- There has been no definitive evidence that the time of exercise in relation to the time of breast-feeding significantly affects the quality of the mother's milk.

### Contraindications to exercise after delivery:

- Heavy bleeding
- Pain
- Breast discomfort; there is often increased pain associated with exercising when breasts are engorged
- Infection or abscess either in the breast or any incision
- Heavy urine leakage or pelvic floor pressure

As a precaution, you should stop exercising until you have reported any of these conditions to your mid wife or physician for evaluation. Always consult a physician before beginning any exercise program.

#### Resource:

*Exercising through your Pregnancy*  
by James F. Clapp

**For more information on Spinning safety, log onto  
[www.spinning.com](http://www.spinning.com).**

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