



## Fact sheet What is safe to do after a caesarean section?

**After a caesarean birth (also known as a C-section), it is important to listen to your body, giving yourself time to recover and for the stitches to heal. Rest is important, as it is for any woman who has given birth, but stay tuned to how your stitches feel. If they ache this means that you are doing too much too soon.**

As soon as you are able to after the birth, gently draw in your tummy before you move, as this will help to protect your wound. You should take care when doing abdominal exercises. Abdominal bracing is recommended once you are comfortable to do this (usually five to seven days after the birth) and should be continued for at least the first few months after the birth. See the fact sheet *Pregnancy and post natal abdominal muscle bracing*. You should avoid doing other abdominal exercises such as sit ups, abdominal curls or crunches, as these can place strain on the caesarian scar.

Normal day to day lifting is OK, but take care to tighten your tummy and look after your back, keeping it straight when lifting. Holding your breath is a good gauge. If you need to hold your breath, it is too much for you to lift (lifting furniture is definitely not recommended!). Household activities like vacuuming, mopping, sweeping and hanging out the washing are fine. Pushing your baby in a pram is fine, but not your toddler as well.

An important guide at any stage after a caesarian is that if you feel any real pulling or stretching or pain at the scar site from your caesarian, you should not continue to push through that.

It is generally considered that it is safe for you to drive when you can push the pedals without feeling any pain, move your foot quickly between the pedals and also are able to turn to look over your shoulder.

By six to eight weeks after your caesarian section your scar should be healed well, although the tissues on the inside are still strengthening up. So you can do things like walking, low impact aerobics, swimming or bike riding for exercise.

If you experience any discomfort after doing any exercise, it is too soon for you to do these. Stop for one or two weeks and try again later, meanwhile continuing with the abdominal bracing exercise taught to you by your physiotherapist. If your tummy overhangs your wound, ask your physiotherapist for a support.

At eight weeks, if you are still experiencing pain on your scar line, then have some tummy time with your baby. Lying on your tummy can gently stretch out the scar. If you continue to experience any discomfort after doing this, then seek further advice from your doctor or physiotherapist.

Your body is still recovering from the birth like anyone else, so you can still have the effects of the relaxin hormone in your body. You need to be careful not to overstress your pelvic floor or your back. You should not commence any high impact exercise until at least three to four months after the birth. For further information body on ensuring that your body is getting back to normal 'on the inside' seek the advice of your physiotherapist.