



**Brighton and Sussex
University Hospitals**
NHS Trust

Fit Bumps and Beyond

About the Class

Fit Bumps and Beyond is an exercise class for pregnant and postnatal women. The class provides an opportunity to begin and progress exercises that are suitable for pregnancy and after having a baby, with the supervision and guidance of a physiotherapist. There is a discussion session at the end of each class which covers topics including posture, pelvic floor exercises, pain relief and practical tips to help you manage your day to day activity. Your exercises, together with the advice provided, are aimed to maintain your strength and functional activity during your pregnancy and after having a baby.

How long is each class?

Each class lasts one hour. You will need to attend 4 exercise sessions to achieve the full benefit from the classes. Please contact us if you are unable to attend the class. The contact numbers are below.

What should you wear?

Please wear appropriate comfortable clothing to complete class based exercises.

Who runs the class?

The class is run by the physiotherapy department. One or two physiotherapists will monitor you closely throughout the class. They will progress your exercises as you are able. If you have any problems with the exercises please do not hesitate to ask.

Will you have to practice the exercises?

Definitely! Improving strength and fitness takes practice. Your physiotherapist will provide you with an exercise programme that you will follow throughout the class. In order to achieve maximum benefit from these exercises you will have to practice them at least two to three times a week. Some of your exercises may have to be done more often. This will be discussed with your physiotherapist.

Contacting the physiotherapy department

You must contact us if you cannot make it to the class for any reason. You will be discharged if you do not attend classes without informing us.

Royal Sussex County Hospital	Telephone 01273 523050
Hove Polyclinic	Telephone 0300 304 0118
Brighton General Hospital	Telephone 01273 665111
Princess Royal Hospital	Telephone 01444 448664

Why is posture important?

Postural changes that occur because of a growing bump may contribute to pelvic and/or back pain. While pregnant and after having a baby, it is important to try to maintain a good posture to reduce the risk of pain and discomfort.

The pelvis consists of three bones and three joints; one joint is at the front (the pubic symphysis) and two are at the back (sacroiliac joints). The spine consists of bones called vertebrae that are stacked on top of each other. The joints of the pelvis and spine are supported by ligaments and muscles, which provide stability and help us to maintain a good posture.

Hormonal changes during pregnancy can cause the ligaments to become more flexible allowing more joint movement. This increased flexibility can last until a few months after pregnancy and/or finishing breastfeeding. This increased movement may contribute to back and/or pelvic pain during and after pregnancy. Your physiotherapist will advise you on your posture.

Here are some further suggestions to reduce strain and discomfort:

- When sitting, sit well back in the chair. You may need a small pillow or folded towel to support your lower back. Make sure your feet touch the floor.
- Ensure work surfaces are at the correct height.
- Try to avoid carrying a toddler on one hip or alternate the hip you use.



- Change your baby at waist height.
- Tighten your tummy muscles and pelvic floor to support your pelvis and back during any activity that requires effort (see below).

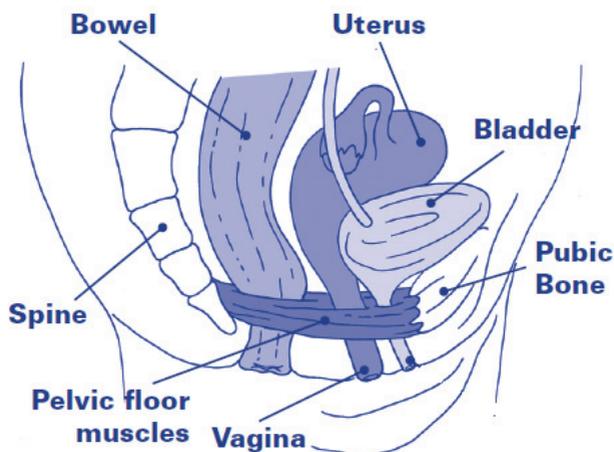
Why are abdominal (tummy) muscles important?

The abdominal muscles form a natural corset, which stretch during pregnancy. It is important to use these muscles to support the lower back and encourage good posture.

To tighten these muscles, place your hands underneath your tummy button, gently draw your tummy away from your hands. If you are pregnant it may feel as though you are lifting your baby up towards you. Practice holding for 10 seconds. Build up to 10 repetitions. Your physiotherapist will advise you on how often to practice this exercise.

Why are pelvic floor exercises important?

Our pelvic floor muscles are at the base of the pelvis, supporting the lower back and pelvic organs, including the womb (uterus) and baby (if pregnant). They help to control the bladder and bowel and may enhance sexual intercourse.



To tighten these muscles imagine that you are stopping yourself from passing wind. Start by squeezing the muscles around the back passage. Feel a squeeze and lift as you draw up and forwards as if you were also stopping the flow of urine. Try to hold for as long as you can, up to 10 seconds. Rest for 4 seconds and then repeat. Build up to practicing 10 repetitions at a time.

We also need our pelvic floor to react quickly when we cough, sneeze or laugh. Therefore it is also important to practice fast pelvic floor squeezes. Try lifting and holding the pelvic floor for a second and then relax. Build up to 10 repetitions.

Your physiotherapist will advise you on how often to practice these exercises.

What practical things can I do to manage day to day living?

Activities that cause one side of the pelvis to move up and down (e.g. walking, climbing stairs) and/or activities that cause each side of the pelvis to move in opposite directions (e.g. getting in/out of bed, swimming breaststroke) may strain the joints and ligaments of the pelvis and cause pain. Try to avoid twisting and sudden movements.

Only do essential lifting. Remember, the more you carry, the more strain on your lower back and pelvis. Sit down and encourage your toddler to climb up onto you to help reduce lifting.

Try to get in and out of bed correctly. When getting out, bend up both knees, roll onto your side and push your body up by pressing your upper hand into the bed and let your feet go down to the floor. To get into bed, sit on the side of the bed and lower your head and shoulders onto the pillow, keep your knees bent and together and lift both legs onto the bed at the same time.



To reduce discomfort when getting in and out of the car, put your bottom on the seat first and then bring both legs in together. This will reduce strain to the pelvic joints.

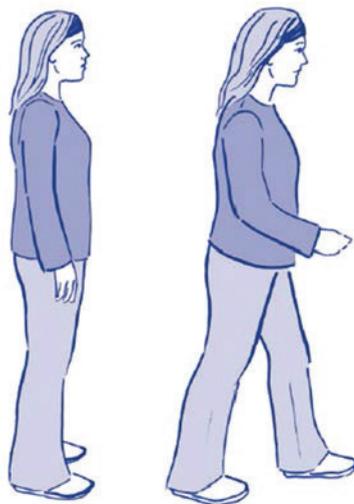
When at all possible, REST! Take the weight off of your pelvis and lower back by sitting or lying down. Sit down to perform jobs you would normally stand for e.g. ironing, preparing food. Remember; never stand when you can sit and never sit when you can lie!

How can I plan my day?

Return to daily activities after pelvic and back pain has to be planned. This means pacing a gradual return to activity, so the body can gradually adjust and strengthen in preparation for function. An athlete with a knee injury wouldn't return to their 800m race without training, yet we sometimes assume during and after pregnancy our bodies will tolerate us immediately returning to all previous activities.

How can I work out what I can manage?

- Start off by working out how much activity you can manage without causing a flare up of your pain. Always start at a lower level than you think you can manage because it is very easy to over do it.
- Stick to the level for a few days until you are confident you have got it right.
- Once you are confident the level is correct and your pain has been stable for a few days start to slowly increase activity a little at a time.
- Do not attempt to increase activity levels too quickly otherwise your pain may increase. This may result in a 'Yo-Yo' pattern of activity, pain and rest, which can lead to reduced function. Using pacing is a way of reducing and controlling a 'Yo-Yo' pattern.



What is a flare up?

Flare ups are when your pain and symptoms suddenly increase, with or without reason. They can last for anything from a couple of hours to a couple of weeks. You may get pain, swelling, stiffness, spasm, weakness, tingling, burning, aching, locking... anything you have experienced before.

Why do the symptoms return?

It is reasonable to assume you have done too much or too little. You may have moved too quickly, been too active or rested too long. Most people can think back to a change in activity, or a situation where they did too much or something new.

However, we know that pain can vary randomly and sometimes you will not be able to work out why you are having increased pain.

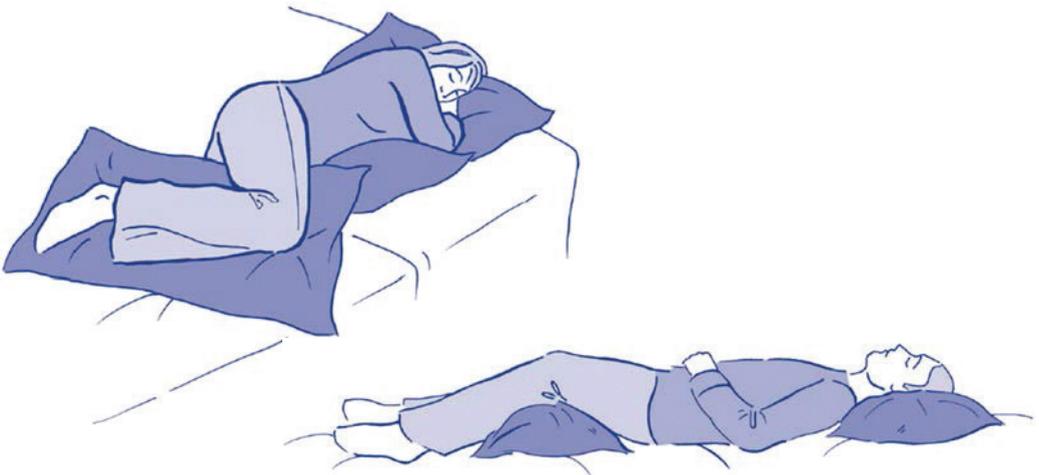
Additional things that can produce a flare up can be stress or anxiety. Colds or flu can also trigger a flare up.

Have I damaged myself?

No! If you run a marathon without training for it, you would not be surprised to have a couple of days of agony as a result. Has that person 'damaged' themselves? No, they have taken their body outside its comfort zone. The pain is to let them know that.

What should I do if I get a flare up?

- **Don't panic!** Flare ups are common during pregnancy and the process of getting better.
- **Soothe the pain.** Note the things that ease your pain. A massage, warm bath or heat pad may be helpful. Some people find using an ice pack for 10 minutes at a time helps.
- **Relaxation.** Using relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises, relaxation CD's and gentle yoga may all help.



- **Distraction.** Being able to take your focus away from the pain and thinking about something else can be helpful.
- Reduce activities and use pacing to return to gentle activity.
- **Pain relief.** Your doctor or pharmacist will be able to advise you on medication appropriate for you.
- **Stretch.** Tight muscles are a common source of unnecessary pain. Gentle controlled stretching can help release any muscle spasm.

It can be useful to have to plan for how to settle a flare up. Your physiotherapist can discuss this with you further.

Useful websites and resources

Pelvic Obstetric and Gynaecological Physiotherapy
pogp.csp.org.uk

Pelvic Partnership
www.pelvicpartnership.org.uk; Tel 01235 820921

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP)
www.csp.org.uk; Tel 0207 3066666

<http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/personal-training-your-pelvic-floor>

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Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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