

Loving Your Body After Childbirth

Here's the best
way to start
today...

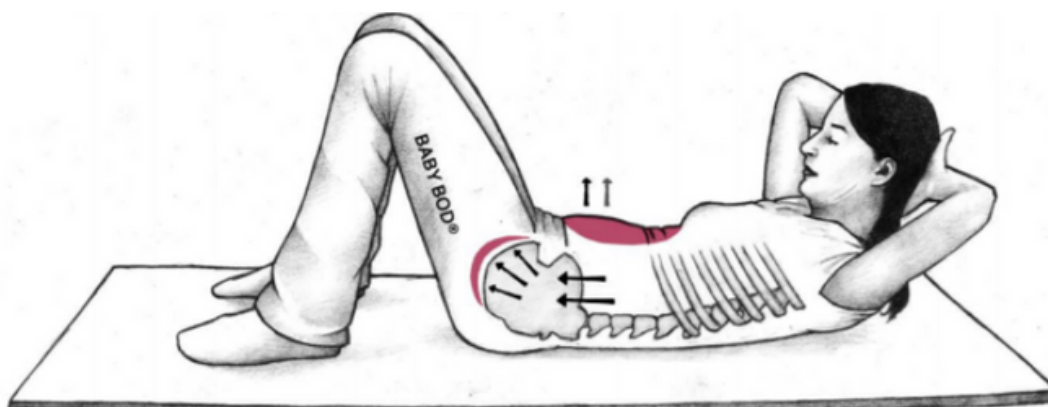


Introduction

Are you looking to get back into shape following a pregnancy? Whether your babies are all grown up or still in diapers – if you're looking to tone up your tummy, you may be tempted to start with sit-ups or abdominal crunches. Because *everyone knows* that is the best way to get a perfect washboard stomach ...right?

Wrong!

The problem with these types of exercises is not so much what they are doing to your 'six-pack' abdominal muscles -- the *real* issue is the effect they are having on your deeper abdominal/core muscles, which lie underneath your 'six-pack' muscles.



As you can see in the picture above, sit-ups can make your lower belly BULGE, rather than flattening it.

Bet you didn't know that!



The Problem with Crunches & Sit-Ups

Performing sit-ups or crunches can actually cause your upper abdominal muscles to become over trained, and much stronger than your deeper abdominal or core muscles. This is referred to as a muscle imbalance. When this occurs, each time you perform a sit-up or a crunch, the upper abdominal wall tightens and causes a 'funnel of pressure' – this pressure will press your lower tummy outwards. Overdoing sit-ups can cause you to develop an unsightly 'bulge' in your lower tummy; and who wants *that*?

And that's not all.....

This 'funnel of pressure' can strain the pelvic floor muscles, which can lead to a bunch of problems, like urinary leakage, sexual dysfunction and pelvic pain. **Yikes!**

So, don't waste your time doing the wrong exercises! In this guide I will teach you four simple exercises that will flatten your tummy and prevent straining your pelvic floor muscles. The best part is: It will take less than 10 minutes per day!

Here are four simple exercises that you can do to replace sit-ups and crunches. They are specifically designed to *strengthen from the inside out*, ensuring that your deeper core abdominal muscles are strengthened at the same time that your 'six-pack' muscles are working – preventing muscle imbalances and helping you develop a flat tummy.



Exercise #1 : The Pelvic / Core Starter



- **Start Position:** Lie comfortably on your back on a firm surface. Make sure to keep your head relaxed – you may use a thin pillow or folded towel placed under your head, if you'd like. Place one or two pillows under your buttocks. *After a week or so of practicing this exercise, you may want to try it without the pillows.*
- Bend your knees and your hips, keeping your feet flat on the ground, hip width apart.
- Place two fingers of each hand on the top part of your panty line, just inside your pelvis.
- Now, gently **EXHALE** and perform a pelvic floor contraction, as if you are trying to stop the flow of 1 or 2 drops of urine. Try to hold this contraction for **3 seconds**.
- Relax. Now perform **3 quick contractions**, where you gently contract and then relax your pelvic floor. Remember to gently **exhale** with each contraction.
- Now, **relax for 6 seconds**.
- **Do each set 10 times in a row, 3 times per day.**



Exercise #1 : The Pelvic / Core Starter

While practicing this exercise, it should feel as though your abdomen is gently drawing in towards your spine - not bulging outwards - as you contract your pelvic floor muscles. **Don't force it** by pulling your belly button towards your spine; let it happen *naturally*. Remember: **Be gentle!** Less is more. If you try too hard, you will be working the outer layer of abdominal muscles, and not your core muscles.

Got it?

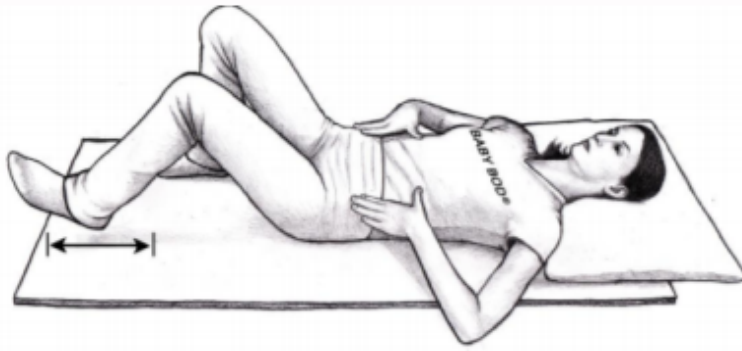
Once you feel confident about doing this exercise correctly, try doing it in different positions: Sitting, standing, or even walking. Then, try to fit it in during your normal daily activities; when you are cooking a meal, sitting at a traffic light, or even checking your Facebook page. Try to gradually build up to holding the long contraction for 5 seconds, and then do 5 quick contractions, relaxing for 10 seconds in between each set.



Try doing the Pelvic / Core Starter in different positions.



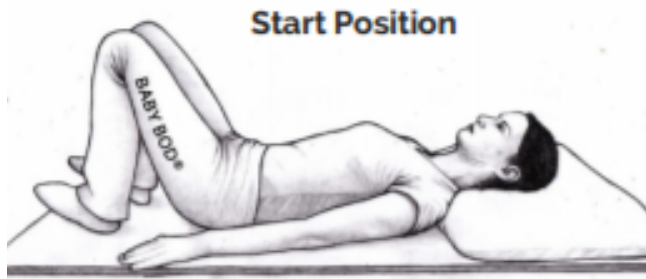
Exercise #2 : The Heel Slider / 'The Hovercraft'



- **Start Position:** Lie comfortably on your back with your knees and hips bent, keeping your feet flat on the ground, hip width apart. Feel free to use a thin pillow or folded towel to support your head.
- Place both hands on your tummy, and spread your fingers so that your thumbs are touching the lower part of your rib cage, and the tips of your fingers are touching the sides of your pelvis. (See *hand placement in the image above.*) **Only your legs should move while you perform this exercise. Use your hands to monitor excessive movement, like your pelvis or rib cage wiggling.**
- First, **gently exhale** and **count out loud** the entire time you do this exercise.
- Lift the heel of your foot about 2 inches (5 cm) above the floor. Keep it there as you slowly slide your foot to straighten your leg, and then bend it again. Keep your foot above the floor the entire time you perform this exercise.
- Do this **10 times on each leg, and work up to 3 sets of 10.**
- **Remember:** Continue gently exhaling and counting out loud while you do the heel slide in both directions.



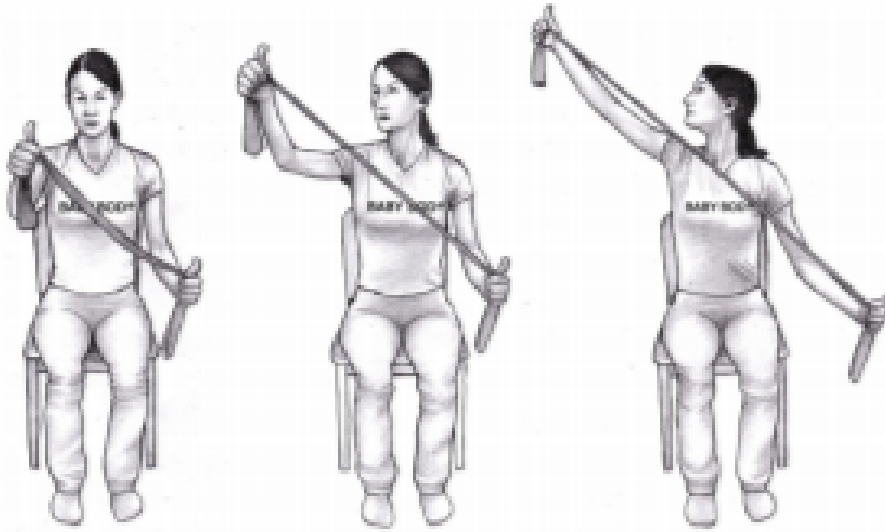
Exercise #3 : The Bridge



- **Start Position:** Lie on your back, with your knees and hips bent, and feet hip width apart. If you'd like, use a thin pillow or folded towel to support your head.
- Your head and arms should be **relaxed** during the entire exercise.
- Put your weight on the heels of your feet, and point your toes towards the ceiling, so that they are lifted off the floor.
- **Gently exhale** and **count out loud** throughout the entire duration of this exercise.
- Next, lift your bottom off the floor, aiming to create a straight line from your shoulders to your knees. Make sure your back is not arched.
- Hold this position for a **count of 3 seconds**, then slowly lower your body back to the starting position. **Repeat this 10 times.**
- Gradually work up to holding the bridge position for **10 seconds**, and repeat 10 times.



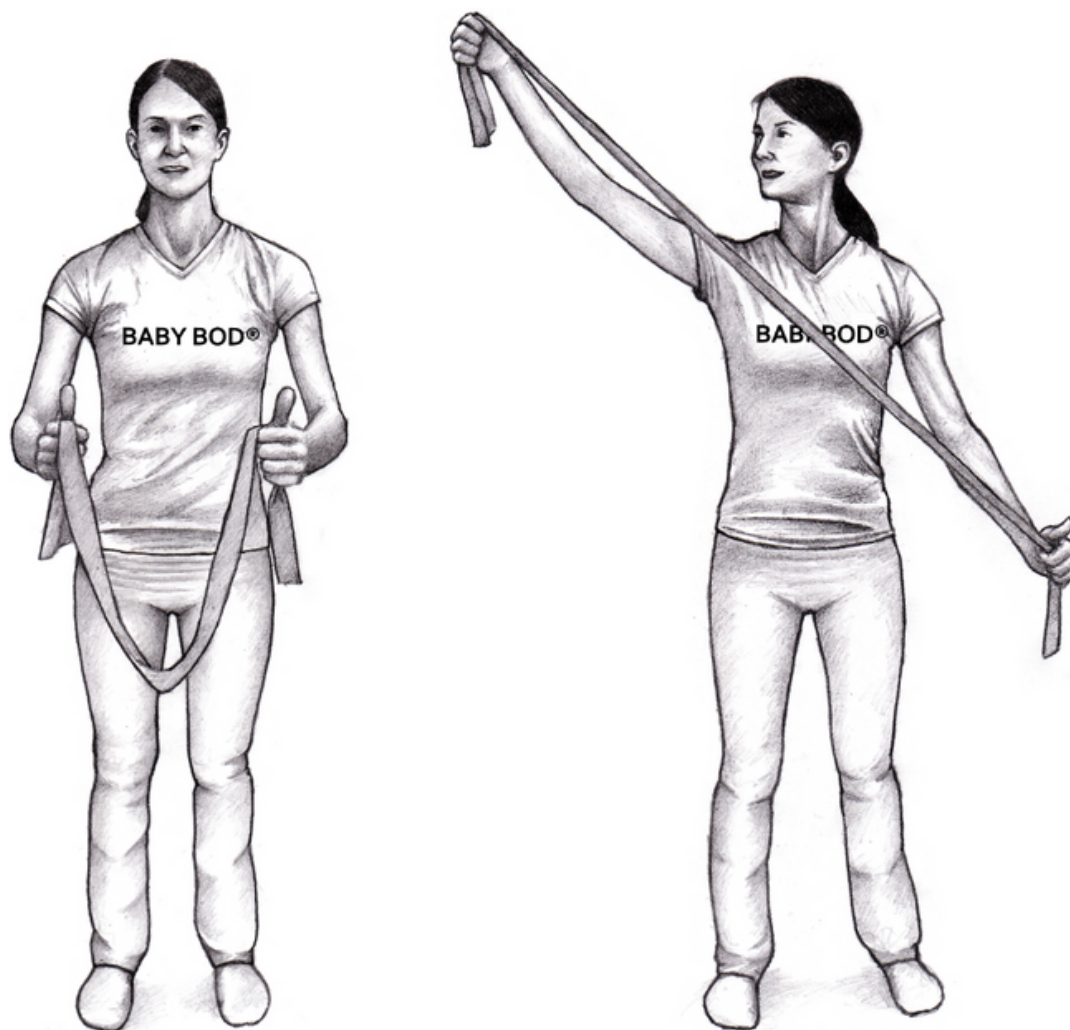
Exercise #4 : Diagonal 'Taffy Pulls'



- **Start Position:** Sit on a chair and hold an exercise band with both hands in the thumbs up position. Next, place one hand at shoulder height and the other at hip height, while holding the exercise band (*see figure above*).
Note: Do not move your lower hand during the exercise.
- Look at the hand that is at shoulder height and **gently exhale or count out loud**, as you move it upwards in a diagonal motion, as if "hitching" a car ride (*see figure above*).
- Continue moving your head and looking at the moving hand as you raise it upwards in a diagonal motion, and then as you slowly lower it back to the start position.
- Do this **10 times on each side**. Try to build up to doing **3 sets of 10 lifts** in the sitting position.

Exercise #4 : Diagonal ‘Taffy Pulls’

Once you feel strong enough and can do 3 sets of 10 ‘Taffy Pulls’ in the sitting position, try to do this exercise while **standing**! Start with **1 set of 10 lifts on each side**, and gradually build up to **3 sets of 10 lifts**.



So, mama, don't despair! Although crunches and sit-ups can prevent you from flattening your tummy, there *are* alternative exercises that you can do to get that washboard stomach you've always wanted.

The exercises I've provided for you here will help you get started without taking up too much of your time. They are very simple, and should take less than 10 minutes a day!



So, what's next?

I'd love to hear how you get on with these exercises. Please share your experience; how did it feel to finally learn some targeted core exercises that are gentle, but oh-so effective? Did you find them easy to follow? Are you noticing more tone in your belly, and maybe even a flatter tummy? Contact me at **info@BabyBodBook.com** with any comments or questions – I'd love to hear from you!



Marianne Ryan PT, OCS

Are you feeling like you need more support, coaching and accountability?

Would you like to join a community of other moms, like you?

YES?

This is what you should do next:



Join the Baby Bod Coaching Program to work one on one with a certified Baby Bod practitioner. We will guide you through postpartum recovery so that you can get back into shape in the fastest and safest way.

Learn more [HERE](#).

This program is designed for **pregnant women, new moms and experienced moms**. It is never too late to recover from childbirth! Once Postpartum, Always Postpartum!



Prior to starting this or any other exercise program, make sure to have medical clearance from your health care professional. These exercises should not be started before you are 6 weeks postpartum and have been given permission to exercise from your doctor, midwife or medical professional.

This free preview of the Baby Bod Book and exercises is intended as a reference volume only, not as a medical manual.

The information given here is designed to help you make informed decisions about your health. It is not intended as a substitute for any treatment that may have been prescribed by your doctor, midwife, or physical therapist. If you suspect that you have a medical problem, I urge you to seek competent medical help.

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