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Media Release – Up to 1 in 3 Women Experience Post-Natal Pelvic Floor Dysfunction  
From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



## Up to 1 in 3 Women Experience Post-Natal Pelvic Floor Dysfunction

There is an abundance of exercise and wellness advice for new mothers, with much of it based on personal experience rather than fact, and most of it centred on getting 'back in shape' rather than 'being healthy'.

With a new baby in the house, a run around the block and a couple of hundred ab crunches is not just unrealistic; it's not advisable.

When you are ready to get active in the postnatal period, it is important to get the right advice and support so that you can get the positive benefits of exercise and activity that fits in with your goals, your circumstances, and takes into consideration your physical condition.

Just as every baby is different, so is every mother, so a one-size fits all approach, or a goal of returning to a pre-pregnancy size quickly will not be helpful for every woman.

The key advice in the first few weeks after giving birth is to take it slowly. The body has and is still undergoing many changes. The benefits of gentle movement and walking can be enjoyed by most soon, but 4-6 weeks after birth is the recommended time to start looking at a structured programme.

A return to exercise is not all about getting your pre-baby body back. Exercise plays an important role in post-natal recovery in areas such as core and pelvic floor strengthening, posture for feeding, and the feel-good benefits at a time that can be overwhelming. An area all women should focus on are the pelvic floor muscles. These are the layer of muscles stretching from the pubic bone at the front, to the tailbone at the back. They form the floor of the pelvis. In the past the focus has been on a few squeezes and not much more. But that is changing and for good reason, with 1 in 3 women experiencing post-natal pelvic floor dysfunction.

Simply getting back into exercise will not automatically strengthen pelvic floor muscles. In fact a return to high impact or heavy weight bearing exercise can make the issue worse.

For most women, being educated and getting advice from a qualified and experienced exercise professional is enough, with referral to women's health physiotherapists if required. A good exercise professional will be trained, and will know when it's time to refer.

References:

<http://www.continence.org.nz>

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**NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs)** - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the “warrant of fitness check” that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - [www.icreps.org](http://www.icreps.org)

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**Exercise Association of New Zealand** - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its *mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards.*

