

## **Postnatal Core**

### **Phase 1: Re-Connect**

During Phase 1, the goal is to re-connect to the core muscles to the brain. After the initial weeks of recovery from birth (the body adjusting to new hormone levels and blood volume, etc. refer to Chapter 5), this phase should be gradual and feel easy. Re-connecting is not necessarily easy but it should feel easy to your client's muscles, not strenuous.

Phase 1 should occur after mom receives her doctor's permission to return to exercise. This phase is important for all moms, whether postpartum (defined as the first 12 months following birth) or ten years postpartum.

It takes hundreds to thousands of repetitions to create muscle memory, but even more than that to get rid of a bad habit or bad posture.

The brain and body will signal to use stronger muscles to compensate for weaker muscles. So now is the time to teach the body good habits.


You might also remember how we talked about building on a house of hay vs. building on a house with a strong foundation. This imagery applies to building a strong foundation with the core.

In Phase 1 I recommend the Core Section be done in the beginning instead of the end of the workout. This is when your postpartum mom has the most energy, and her muscles have not yet been taxed by exercise. But sometimes workout preferences trump the methodology! It is important not to use the core exercises intermittently through a workout – moving from standing to lying positions too quickly will affect a new mom's equilibrium.

*Following the Postnatal SlimDown® Format on page 134, we have created a guide for Phase 1.* This will help you combine the exercises in the video with a format that suites your client and/or class. Note we did not include recommended times or sets. Phase 1 is a delicate time and everything needs to be adjusted according to the new mom.

It is also important to cover these functional activities with your client: breastfeeding, holding a newborn, proper car seat lifting, etc. while activating the TA. This will minimize back pain and stressed muscles in the upper back.

Check in on your client's nutrition. Refer to Chapter Six for recommendations on the initial 6 weeks postpartum

<b>Warm Up</b>	Performing a gradual warm up that mimics the upcoming exercise is recommended.
<b>Core Training</b>	Ideally you want to activate each core muscle group (obliques, TA, Rectus, back, glutes). Core moves in Phase 1 can be used everyday.  See Video
<b>Strength Training</b>	If mom worked out during pregnancy, toning exercises can gradually be added into the routine. Strength should be done every other day.
<b>Cardio</b>	Walking
<b>Cool Down and Flexibility</b>	Stretching does not get enough praise! It is crucial during the postpartum period. See page 136 in the Instructor Manual for ideas.

### **Postnatal Phase 1 Core Exercises**

**\*see video**

1. TA Breathe
2. Arm Circle with TA Engagment
3. 4 Count Crunch
4. 90 Degree Hinge – includes variations
5. TA Curl in Touch Down
6. 90 Degree Rainbow
7. Bicycle Leg Extension – includes variations
8. Butterfly Pelvic Tilt – add crunch
9. Seal
10. Oblique Crunch
11. Bridge – includes variations
12. Table Top

Repetitions – there is not an exact amount of repetitions recommended for this phase. Use 3-5 different exercises. Adjust according mom’s strength, energy and sleep!

Please note that you will need to modify for any postnatal conditions such as Diastasis Recti – see Diastasis Recti video.

