

We've got your **BACK!**

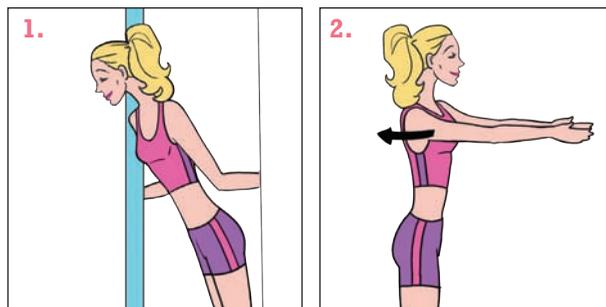
by KATHLEEN TROTTER

Pregnancy and child care can wreak havoc on your posture — and that can become a serious pain. These moves target three big problem areas to get you standing tall and back in your groove

Problem zone Upper back and shoulders.

Cause Constantly bending forward to tend to babies and toddlers.

Solution 1 Stretch out your chest: Place your arms at a 90 degree angle on either side of a door frame. Keep your arms where they are and lean your chest slightly forward. Hold for 30 seconds.

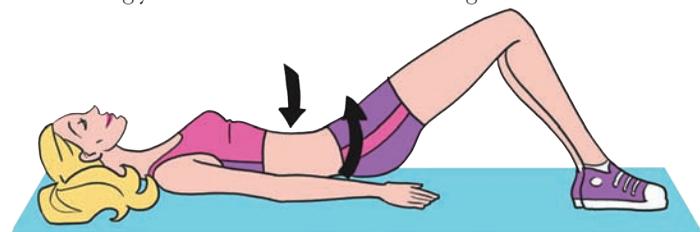


Solution 2 Strengthen your back: Directly after doing the chest stretch, finish by performing straight-arm shoulder blade retractions. First, stand with your arms straight out in front of you at shoulder height. Then, keeping your arms straight, retract your shoulder blades so that your arms move slightly backward in your shoulder sockets.

Problem zone Stiffness, aching and pain in the lower back.

Cause Pregnancy, weak lower abdominal muscles and improper use of your lower abdominal muscles when you pick up and carry your baby.

Solution Perform posterior pelvic tilts. Lie on your back with your legs bent and your feet on the ground. Imagine pulling your pubic bone up toward your chest to “tuck” your pelvis. This tucking motion should bring your lower back closer toward the ground.



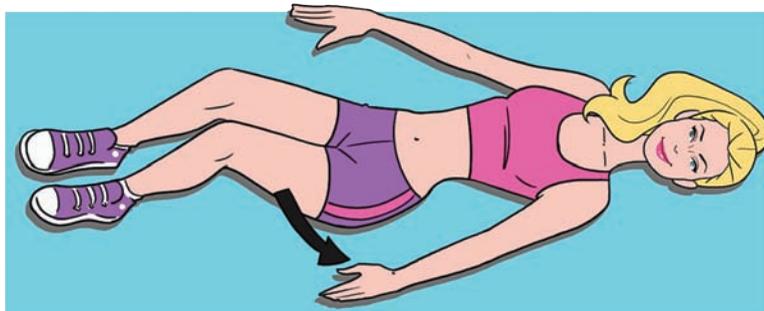
Concentrate on using your lower abdominals (the muscles from your belly button to your pubic bone) to do the work.

Note: Always consult a physician when experiencing lower back pain. Make sure your physician says the pain is just natural stiffness from childbirth and looking after little ones before performing any abdominal or lower-back exercises.

Problem zone Aching hip.

Cause Always carrying the baby on the same hip, causing a chronically high hip.

Solution Do hip sways. Before you do this exercise, ask yourself: “Which hip do I most often hold my baby on?” That side is the one you most likely tend to hike up.



To do this exercise, lie on your back with your legs bent and feet on the ground. Slide your low hip (probably your left if you are right-handed) along the ground toward your left lower ribs. Try to feel the muscles in that left side along your waistline. Return the hip back to the original position and then repeat 15 times.

BANISH baby belly

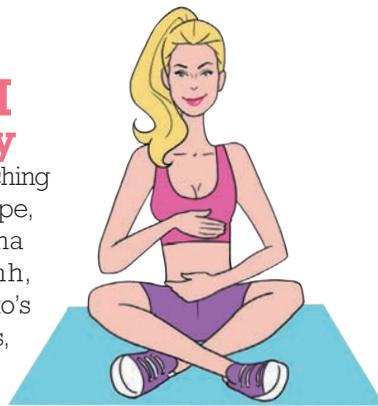
Forget about crunching abs back into shape, advises Samantha Montpetit-Huynh, founder of Toronto's Core Expectations, a personal training company that specializes in postnatal fitness.

Instead, try “the elevator,” from Montpetit-Huynh's ab rehab program:

1. Sit cross-legged on the floor with your back against a wall.
2. Place one hand on the top half of your abdomen and the other on the bottom.
3. Inhale, filling your belly up with air.
4. Exhale, pulling your stomach in and holding for 30 seconds.
5. Next, squeeze the muscles around your lower spine inward.
6. Finish with a breath.
7. Do this 10 times daily for three weeks.

Interested in the whole program? Check out coreexpectations.com.

— Dana Dougherty Reinke



Carriers that care Baby wearing is a great way to snuggle and bond with your bambino, but some carriers can leave you with serious back pain. Here are four carriers that deliver solid support



A. BabyHawk Mei Tai Baby Carrier in Orchid Fantasy Cream/Esspresso, \$105, bynature.ca

A compact, versatile carrier that has no clips or buckles and allows for several carrying positions. Padded straps help distribute baby's weight across your back and shoulders.

B. BabyBjörn Baby Carrier Active Organic, \$180, babybjorn.com This carrier supports your lower back, while the built-in contoured panels and belt relieve pressure on upper back and shoulders.



C. Beco Baby Carrier in Lauren, \$160, bynature.ca

This carrier spreads baby's weight evenly across your body to prevent neck, shoulder and lower-back strain.

D. Ergo Baby Carrier Back Carry in Galaxy Grey, \$119, bynature.ca Here's a backpack-style carrier that has adjustable waist, chest and shoulder belts (with an additional waist extender) and is designed to hold baby's weight on your hips and upper thighs, preventing backache.



— Sarah Kirmani