

Easing Pelvic Pain with Gentle Exercises: A 1-Month Program

This handout can help you recover, if your acute pelvic problems have already been resolved (surgery, endometriosis, infection, etc), but have left you with some persistent pain.



When you are healing from inflammation, infection, or surgery, sometimes your tissues develop "adhesions," getting stuck together the way fresh cooked spaghetti sticks together when it's out of the water. Alternatively, sometimes you can get a little free fluid in the pelvic space, as a result of bleeding or ovarian fluid leakage. Fluid in the pelvis can itself be irritating to the pelvic nerves, and takes a while to re-absorb.

Exercises help in two ways:

1. They improve mobility of the soft tissues and internal organs, which might reduce problems from adhesions, and
2. They improve the general circulation to and from the area, which might improve or speed up fluid re-absorption.

Warning: If you have pelvic pain that is rapidly worsening, fever (101F or more) or shaking chills, nausea and vomiting, a missed period, or unusual vaginal discharge, please do *not* try to fix these with gentle exercises. Call your personal doctor or urgent care center for an appointment within the next 24 hours!



I recommend that you choose **5** exercises below (for a total of 5-10 minutes per session), and **do them daily for 1 month.**

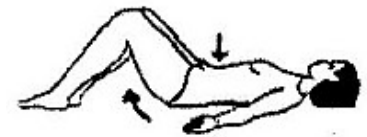
Notify your doctor if they haven't helped at *all*, even if you've done them faithfully every day for a month.

Pelvic rock

Lie on your back with your feet apart and knees bent. Let your arms relax on the floor. While breathing out slowly, draw your navel inward toward your spine, flattening your lower back against the floor.

Breathing in, relax your back and belly into a neutral position.

Repeat 15 times at a natural breathing pace (about one minute).



Crossovers

Lie on your back with your feet apart and knees bent.

Breathing out, clasp your hands over one knee and gently pull it towards the opposite shoulder.

Hold it there, while letting your other leg gently relax down and straighten out as much as is comfortable.

Breathe in and out, gently pulling your knee closer to the opposite shoulder.

Then, breathing out, let go of your knee, and let your leg straighten all the way out. Relax for a moment.

Repeat on the other side. Perform a total of three cycles (both sides).



Floor twist

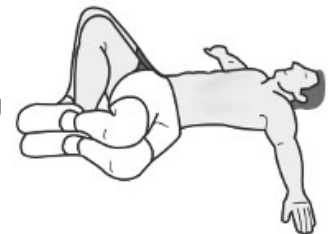
Lie flat on your back with your knees bent, feet together and flat on the floor. Stretch your arms straight out to the sides, pressing your palms against the floor.

Breathing in and moving just from the waist, gently let your knees drop over to one side (knees together), then exhale as you bring your knees back to center. Pause briefly in the center.

Repeat on the other side: breathing in as your knees drop over, breathing out as you bring them back to center. (Use your hands to stabilize you, pressing down with your palms on the floor, so you don't twist from the shoulders.)

Build up a gentle rhythm, guided by your breathing.

Repeat for a total of six to eight full cycles (both sides).



The cobra

Lie flat on your stomach, feet together, palms on the floor under your shoulders. Point your toes down so the tops of your feet touch the floor.

Breathing in, push off with your hands, straightening your arms as much as you can, lifting your chest off the floor. Your hips stay on the floor, and your back is arched.

Look up. Breathe slowly and evenly for four breaths.

Then gently relax back down onto the floor and rest for four breaths.

Repeat four times.



□ **Seated twist**

Use a broomstick or a long scarf for this exercise.

Sit on the floor with legs folded, or on a chair or box, with feet firmly planted. (You do not want to wiggle around on your butt while doing this exercise.)

Hold the stick or scarf in both hands, at shoulder level, so that it rests behind your back.

Moving from the waist only, twist from side to side.

Build up a gentle comfortable rhythm. Let the rhythm take you deeper into the twist on each side. Let your belly muscles contract and relax, doing the work for you.

Don't forget to breathe!

Repeat for about 30-40 full twists (left and right).



□ **Balance ball ABCs**

Sit centered and tall on the ball with your feet flat on the floor, comfortably separated, and your hands on your hips or thighs.

Breathe in, drawing your pelvic floor up firmly (as if you are holding in urine).

Imagine that your tailbone is a pencil. Now using that pencil, "write" the alphabet in very large, exaggerated letters, using your tailbone. Return to center between letters.

It takes some practice to coordinate your slow deep breathing with your "writing." Don't hold your breath!

One trip through the alphabet = one complete exercise.

You can also do this exercise "writing" numbers, "writing" prayers or affirmations, etc. - as long as you spend 1-2 minutes on the activity.



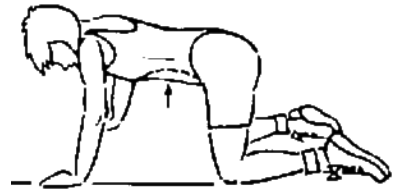
□ **Crawling**

Short instructions: Crawl around on your hands and knees, taking an occasional break to stretch.

Complete instructions: Get on your hands and knees, drawing your belly muscles up so they are firm. Maintaining a firm belly and breathing evenly, crawl across the room or down the hall (15-20 feet).

At the end, rest back onto your heels with arms straight out, hands on the floor (partial fetal position or so-called "salaam"), and rest for two deep breaths.

Turn around, and repeat for a total of 2-3 complete laps (back and forth).



Variations:

○ Pacing: Try crawling with left hand and knee forward, then right hand and knee forward (instead of left hand-right knee and vice versa).

Takes practice! Keep your belly firm, and don't hold your breath.

○ Lunge crawl: Before moving each knee forward, stretch it straight out behind you and look upward, while exhaling. Don't hurry - build a comfortable rhythm.



A note about breathing: *Your breath can help you get maximum benefit from these exercises. The movement of your diaphragm provides a gentle massage to the interior of your whole torso.*

In general, breathe out (exhale) when tightening the belly, and breathe in (inhale) when relaxing the belly. If you're holding a pose for a while, breathe in and out gently while relaxing into the pose.

If you find yourself holding your breath (or pinching shut your lips or eyes), don't get frustrated. Just patiently return to gentle full breathing with a relaxed face.

Other helpers:

Self-massage: Apply warmed castor oil (may mix with olive oil or other massage oil if desired) to the skin over the painful area, and massage it in with deep, smooth strokes. Pay attention to your breathing, and let your abdominal muscles relax. Do this daily for about five minutes at bedtime, for one month (or longer).

Diet: If you are having bowel problems because of pelvic pain, consider going on a lower-residue diet for 1 month. This is a diet low in fiber, so avoid or reduce: whole grains, fruit and vegetable peels, raw foods, and whole nuts and seeds. (Note: it's okay to use prune juice to prevent constipation, 1/2 cup nightly, while on this diet.) After one month, add fiber back to your diet, starting with fruit and vegetable juices and moving on to whole-grain flour products.

Gentle herbal tonics: Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*; infusion [1 oz dried plant in 1 quart boiled water, steep until cold], 1 cup twice daily, or whole-plant tincture, 1 dropperful 4 times daily for 1 month), or Black Haw (*Viburnum prunifolium*, also known as Cramp Bark; bark tincture, 1 dropper 4 times daily for 1 month), or Angelica (*Angelica sinensis*, also known as Dong Quai; root tincture, 1 dropper 4 times daily for 1 month; consult your personal doctor if you take blood thinners, before using).