

HEALTH ● DIET ● FITNESS ● LIFESTYLE

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FOR
MEN AND
WOMEN

GET A BIKINI BODY

IN 6-WEEKS

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For Good! **Page 66**

Have Great
LEGS **Page 48**

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POST NATAL SWISS BALL EXERCISE

by James Walsh

Finally, the baby has arrived, and you've had six weeks or so to settle into your routine. Well, here's another routine you might like to think about – yes, exercise! The great advantage of using a Swiss ball for your post natal exercise sessions is that it's fun and interesting, and facilitates balance and co-ordination. The Swiss ball also activates the muscles which stabilise your joints – in particular, the muscles which surround your spine. In the previous Ultra-FIT, we looked at ante natal Swiss ball exercise. In this issue we'll focus on activating and stimulating the stabilising muscles of the spine and pelvis, whilst maintaining range of motion around the pelvis and strengthening the legs.

Getting you back to normal

Let's face it, your body has just undergone a huge range of physical and hormonal changes in readiness for the delivery of your child. Now your body is re-establishing its equilibrium, and Swiss ball exercise will assist in this transition period.

At this point, I would like to highlight the importance of participating in post natal exercise classes. Whether you have had your baby naturally, or by caesarean section, post natal classes are important. If you've had a caesarean section, you must remember your abdominal wall has been cut. This can cause de-innervation to the muscles and subsequent dysfunction of the abdominal wall. Scar tissue may also create complications, so I strongly recommend attending post natal classes run through your chosen hospital, or though private practitioners such as a midwife, chiropractor, physiotherapist, or exercise specialist in pregnancy health.

Before you begin

Prior to starting your six step workout, let me give you a couple of hints to maximise the impact of your routine. The aim of this routine is to activate the stabilising muscles of the spine and pelvis and increase their strength and function. To assist in spinal and pelvic stability and strengthening, we will use two key strategies:

■ Draw your belly button towards your spine, as this helps to activate your transverse abdominis. Do this whilst performing each exercise, and breathe gently throughout.

■ Activate your pelvic floor whilst performing each exercise. This is done by mimicking the action of stopping your urine mid-flow.

Transverse abdominis and pelvic floor activation are important for both back health and minimising the possibility of incontinence. More information on incontinence prevention should be readily available through ante and post natal exercise classes.

THE EXERCISES

Lower body twist

Lie on your back. Place your calves on the ball. Keep your knee and hip at 90 degrees. Rotate from side to side slowly. Keep your belly button drawn in and pelvic floor activated.

Reps: 15 each side

Sets: 2

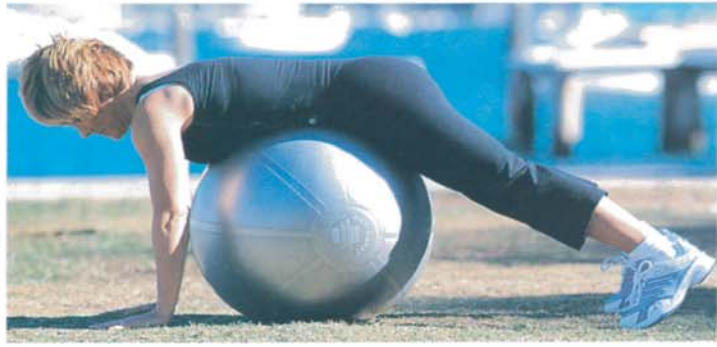
Rest: 30 sec

Target area: Abdominals – internal & external obliques.



Hip extension

Lie face down on the ball (as illustrated) with your hands directly beneath your shoulders. Draw your belly button in and activate pelvic floor. Lift one leg and return to start position. Repeat the other side.



Reps: 15 each side

Sets: 2

Rest: 30-60 sec

Target area: Gluteus maximus. Hamstring. Lower back.



Supine lateral ball roll

Lie on your back on the ball, arms out, palms up and with your head supported by the ball. Maintain pelvic alignment, knee and ankle at 90 degrees. Slowly move your shoulders across the ball and return to the centre, and then move to the opposite side. You have an option of moving your feet with you,

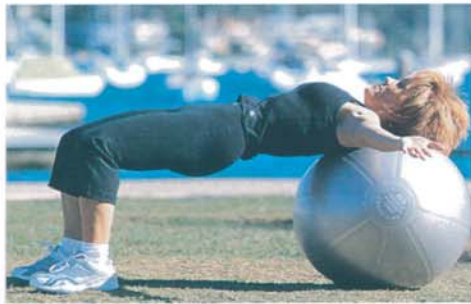
or keeping them in place. Moving your feet makes the exercise more difficult.

Reps: 8 each side

Sets: 2

Rest: 30 sec

Target area: Gluteus maximus. Hamstring.



Abdominal crunch (right)

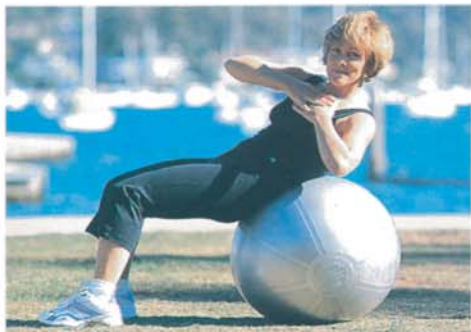
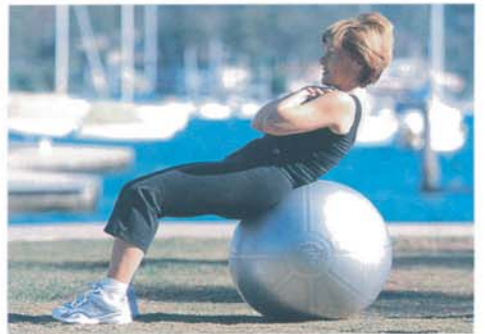
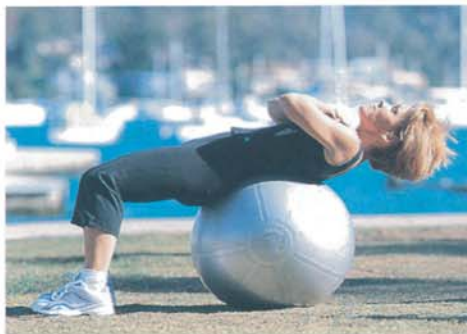
Lie on the ball, with the ball supporting your lower back. With your arms crossed across your chest, initiate a curling movement from the head by tucking your chin and rolling up into a crunch position. Slowly return to start position.

Reps: 12-15

Sets: 2-3

Rest: 60 sec

Target area: Rectus Abdominus. Abdominals.



Oblique abdominal crunch (above)

From crunch start position roll up, take your opposite shoulder to opposite hip then return to start position. Repeat on other side.

Reps: 12-15

Sets: 2-3

Rest: 60 sec

Target area: Abdominals – internal & external obliques.

Forward ball roll (below)

Position yourself on your knees, forearms on the ball. Upper arm and upper leg at 90 degrees approx to your trunk. Roll the ball forward – co-ordinating your shoulder and hip to move together. Only move forward to your threshold

and maintain alignment of your back.

Return to start position.

Reps: 8-12

Sets: 2

Rest: 60 sec

Target area: Abdominals. Latissimus dorsi.

