

# Women's health

Summer 2023

## Fitness over 40 - what to do

*As women enter their 40s, the perimenopause and menopause causes changes to their bodies; our women's health expert Jenny Deeming shares her knowledge about what can happen.*

The perimenopause is a gradual process where the ovaries start producing less oestrogen causing the menstrual cycle to become irregular until it eventually stops – the menopause. This can take up to ten years but varies from person to person.

If you are at this stage in your life, it is a good time to re-evaluate how you are exercising. How you exercised in your 20s isn't necessarily how you should be exercising now. The World Health Organisation advises we do 30 minutes of exercise a day for 5-7 days a week, but how do you make the best of that time?

### Improve bone strength

As oestrogen levels drop, women's bone density can decrease leading to weaker bones and an increased risk of osteoporosis. The most effective way to keep bones strong is to do a combination of weight bearing exercise with impact and muscle strengthening exercises.

Weight bearing exercise needs to be a form of exercise where you are standing on your feet and can include walking, running, racquet sports, High Intensity Training (HIT) and aerobic classes.

Muscle strengthening requires some form of resistance whether that be a weight, resistance band or body weight. For best results the resistance should be progressed over time and performed 2 – 3 times a week for 20-30 minutes on non-consecutive days.



### Improve heart health

As you get older your risk of heart disease increases. To combat this, try aerobic exercise to make the heart pump harder thereby improving the heart muscle. This can include a brisk walk, running, swimming, cycling, dancing etc.

### Improve mental health

Fluctuating hormones can cause significant changes in mood. Aerobic exercise has been shown to improve anxiety and depression by increasing blood flow and the release of natural endorphins (chemicals related to happiness). Pilates and yoga can help with flexibility, relaxation and a focus on the mind and body, therefore reducing muscle tension caused by stress.

### Improve menopause symptoms and abdominal fat

Menopause can cause an increase in abdominal fat that can be hard to shift. HIT has been shown to reduce abdominal fat and keep weight steady. This type of cardio exercise will also help to reduce risks of certain cancers developing, heart disease and type two diabetes.

In conclusion – mix it up! In a week, aim for:

- one longer weight bearing activity, ie a walk
- one high intensity session such as a HIT workout
- three moderate sessions, ie jogging, swimming, team or racquet sport.
- two resistance training sessions, and
- a flexibility or mobility session ideally with an element of relaxation.

If you experience feelings of prolapse, incontinence, back or pelvic pain whilst exercising, we recommend you see a women's health physiotherapist.



## Mummy MOT – Looking after new mums

Mummy MOTs are a specialised postnatal health assessment designed to support and care for new mothers.

Pregnancy and childbirth put immense strain on a women's body but with this top to toe assessment, our women's health specialist Jenny Deeming, will aim to identify any musculoskeletal issues that may have arisen during pregnancy or delivery.

As a qualified Mummy MOT practitioner, Jenny will perform a series of tests to assess pelvic floor strength, abdominal muscle separation (diastasis recti), overall posture and more.

By undergoing a Mummy MOT, women can gain valuable insights into their physical condition and receive appropriate advice and treatment to aid their recovery.

Mummy MOTs have gained popularity as a means to optimise postnatal recovery, help to prevent long-term complications, and empower mothers to lead active, pain-free lives.

A Mummy MOT costs £110 and is suitable for women from six weeks post birth. For more information see [www.thephysiotherapycentre.org.uk/post-natal-physiotherapy](http://www.thephysiotherapycentre.org.uk/post-natal-physiotherapy) or call us on 01428 647647.



## About Jenny

Jenny Deeming is a qualified physio and specialises in women's health.

She holds women's health clinics for the diagnosis and treatment of a range of post-natal conditions and is an accredited Mummy MOT practitioner.

## New mum with a sore thumb?

De-quervains is a common complaint for new mums. It is a repetitive strain injury resulting in irritation and inflammation of the tendons at the base of the thumb and wrist. It can make lifting, changing and feeding your baby uncomfortable.

### Top tips for reducing pain

- Try to maintain your wrist in a 'neutral' position
- Keep your thumb tucked in when holding your baby
- Ice the base of your thumb
- Gentle massage to the base.

### Need some extra help?

Physios can provide information on splints/taping, or provide specific stretches or a strengthening programme that is personalised to you.

## How to keep your bladder healthy

If you have any bladder pain, incontinence or struggle to fully empty your bladder, seek advice from a women's health physiotherapist.

If you have bladder problems you may be tempted to manage this by drinking less. However, this causes concentrated urine and constipation which can irritate the bladder further. In order to keep your bladder healthy, our advice is to:

- Drink well, visit the toilet regularly and empty your bladder fully.
- Make sure you drink regularly during the day; one and a half to two litres of clear fluid are advised – you may need to increase this through the summer months.
- Avoid having too many drinks containing alcohol or caffeine, especially before bed.
- Avoid other bladder irritants which include cigarette smoking.

Contact us to book a Mummy MOT or an initial assessment with Jenny.

You can also follow us on Instagram @the\_physiotherapy\_centre or Facebook @holycrossphysio/

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