

new mama on the mat

*Restore your core
after pregnancy with this
vigorous practice.*



A few months after giving birth to a child, you may be eager to get to your mat. But you are likely to discover that pregnancy and childbirth have weakened your abdominal muscles, so they'll probably need reconditioning. **When your body is ready** to be challenged again, try the sequence on the following pages created by vinyasa flow yoga teacher (and new mom) Claire Missingham.

This practice will get you in touch with the manipura chakra, which governs the navel and solar plexus area. "This energetic force can be weak, not just physically but psychologically, too, after the sheer willpower that giving birth requires," says Missingham. Working the core in Plank and Paripurna Navasana (Full Boat Pose) can reignite a sense of strength and self-confidence. Other poses in the sequence gently release tension all through the body. A supine Gomukhasana (Cow Face Pose) can be a balm to the outer hips and gluteal muscles. Bridge and Eagle are great for relieving the tension in the chest, shoulders, and upper back that builds as you carry a new baby around.

Wait at least six weeks after delivery before you try this practice (you may need to wait longer if you've had a cesarean section). Get approval from a health care practitioner before you begin. When you choose to begin, be sure to allow yourself to do fewer repetitions or shorter holds if you need to, and frame the practice as a way to nurture yourself. **DIANE ANDERSON**

to begin

Use music Pick something uplifting and energetic, or calming and introspective, to reconnect with your unique inner rhythm.

Create an altar

Place a photo of a person who inspires you, and one of your baby, on an altar to honor your achievement in creating new life.

Breathe deeply Do Ujjayi Pranayama (Victorious Breath) to bring your attention to the present moment.

to finish

Rest Take Savasana (Corpse Pose) for at least 10 minutes, so that your body gets to completely let go.

Enjoy the quiet Sit with your hands in Anjali Mudra (Salutation Seal) at your heart. Appreciate all that you have.

PHOTOS: CHRIS ANDRE; MODEL: CLAIRE MISSINGHAM; STYLIST: LYN HEINEKEN; HAIR/MAKEUP: VERONICA SJOEN/
ARTIST UNITED; TOP: LULULEMON; PANTS: SHAKTI ACTIVEWEAR; MALA: BHATTI BEADS; JEWELRY: SATYA JEWELRY



1 Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose), variation

Start with your feet together. With each exhalation, draw the navel to the spine in Uddiyana Bandha (Upward Abdominal Lock) to engage the pelvic floor muscles and draw them up. Stay for 10 breaths. Once you feel stable, separate the feet hip-distance apart.

2 Plank Pose

Inhale and shift into Plank. Align shoulders over your wrists. Press back firmly through the heels and gaze between the thumbs. Relax your jaw and stay for 20 breaths. Then flow from Down Dog to Plank 10 times, inhaling to Plank and exhaling to Down Dog. Step your feet to your hands and fold in Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend). Lift your arms to stand, then exhale into Tadasana (Mountain Pose).

3 Garudasana (Eagle Pose)

Wrap your right leg over your left and hook your toes around your lower leg. Place the left arm over the right and touch your palms together. Stay upright and bend the supporting knee. Lift the elbows up and move the hands away from the face. Gaze gently out at a fixed point. Stay for 10 breaths on each side. Return to Tadasana.

4 Paripurna Navasana (Full Boat Pose), variation

Sit with your legs together and back straight, lift your legs off the floor, and bend your knees. Stay here for 5 breaths. Hold the back of your thighs or reach your arms forward, palms facing in. Engage your core, exhale, straighten one



leg; inhale, release back; exhale, switch sides. Repeat the change of legs 10 times, then release your feet onto the floor, hold your shins, and open your chest to the sky. Repeat twice, and then lie on your back.

5 Jathara Parivartanasana (Revolved Abdomen Pose)

Bring your knees to your chest, draw your navel in, and keep the pelvic floor engaged. Place your arms, palms up, on the floor. Bring your knees over your hips so your legs form a right angle. Exhale, press the shoulder blades into the earth, and lower the legs to the right, almost touching the floor. Inhale up and repeat to the other side. Continue for 20 breaths. Hug your knees and breathe deeply.

6 Elbow-to-Knee Pose

Interlace your fingers behind your head and bend your knees. Exhale, lengthen the right leg, draw your left knee toward your chest, and lift up to touch it with your right elbow. Inhale, release; exhale, change sides. Press your low back into the earth. On exhalations, pull your navel back and feel your pelvic floor lift up buoyantly. Do this 4 times on each side, then rest and repeat it one more time.

7 Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose), variation

Bend your knees and press into Bridge Pose, and then breathe there for up to a minute. Exhale and roll back down to the floor, vertebra by vertebra. Inhale and roll back up. This time, take your arms overhead as you root the shoulder blades down. Exhale to roll down. Repeat 10 times, opening your chest more each time.





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8 Supta Gomukhasana (Reclining Cow Face Pose)

Cross your left leg over your right, stacking the knees on top of each other. Hold your outer ankles firmly. As you exhale, draw the feet toward the floor on either side of your waist, and you'll feel a deep release in the hips and buttocks. Stay as long as it feels good, then switch legs. Take a moment to relax on your back.

9 Supta Garudasana (Reclining Eagle Pose), variation

From your back, bring your legs into Garudasana with the right leg on top. Drop the legs to the left, gently drawing the right knee toward the earth. Reach the right arm to the right until you are in a deep spinal twist. On the exhalation, deepen the twist from the navel, keeping the pelvic floor active. Close your eyes and remain here for 10 slow breaths, then change sides.

10 Matsyasana (Fish Pose)

Stretch your legs in front of you. Inhale and press your forearms and elbows down as you lift your chest and head away from the floor. Release your head back onto the floor. Either the back or the crown of your head will rest on the floor. This pose opens the heart. Stay for 10 breaths.



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cut out
and save!