

Postpartum Belly Binding

Binding your postpartum belly is the best first step you can take to help you get back to your pre-pregnancy self.

Anthropological record shows that mothers across time have ritually bound the abdominal area after childbirth to provide external support to the posture and to compress the abdominals to heal the muscles and help shrink the uterus back to its pre-pregnant size. Outside of the English-speaking world, belly-binding occurs with regular frequency.

Whether you have had a C-section or a vaginal birth with or without complications, belly binding makes all kinds of sense.

WHY BIND?

After childbirth, the muscles of the abdomen are extremely lax. They've been trained to hold something about the size of a watermelon, and now suddenly that watermelon is gone. The danger here is that the spine relies on the coordination of the core musculature to hold a person up so when half of those muscles suddenly don't function well (or at all!), back pain and dysfunction generally result.

Worse, when the abdominals are left to their own devices right after birth, they start repairing themselves right into that permanent mommy tummy position.

If you don't teach a wild muscle how to be civilized, it will do whatever it finds easiest and most convenient. So when you breastfeed or bottle feed your newborn for all of those long hours, well beyond the current capacity of your core to support you, you will in effect be further training your abdominals to persist in that dysfunctional and unattractive dome shape.

So the idea of belly binding is to provide the external structure that the abdominals currently aren't capable of providing.

In addition, the core needs encouragement knitting back together correctly, particularly if the mother delivered via C-section. There's no better way to train muscles to sit properly than to pair mechanical placement of the muscles (i.e. gentle constriction) with consistent targeted exercise.

DOESN'T NOT USING A MUSCLE MAKE IT WEAKER?

That's a great question, one I get often from fit moms with great intentions.

It may help to think of it in terms of a temporary support, much like you would wear after a sprained ankle. The wrap helps those ligaments and muscles that have been very stretched have some support while they heal and contract.



Binding doesn't weaken the muscles. Rather, belly-binding supports the muscles while they move back into place. Without the support, the muscles are constantly trying to contract against gravity in a weakened state. The wrap or garment allows them to regain their strength within the protection of the binding.

One night of spasming muscles that have been left to drop in the now empty space after delivery will be enough to convince any doubter that there are good reasons for providing external support to the body during recovery. You're going to want a belly binder that covers you "from stem to stern".

And by the way, it is absolutely better to have SOMETHING than nothing at all. Get that tummy bound right away. You'll astound your OBGYN with how much more quickly you're recovering than your fellow mamas.

WHAT ABOUT AFTER A C-SECTION?

If you had a Caesarian, you're going to need and possibly even desire the support of a belly binding garment right after delivery. Your incision will heal more quickly and you may also find that the pain and instability around the surgery will be alleviated while you are belly binding: