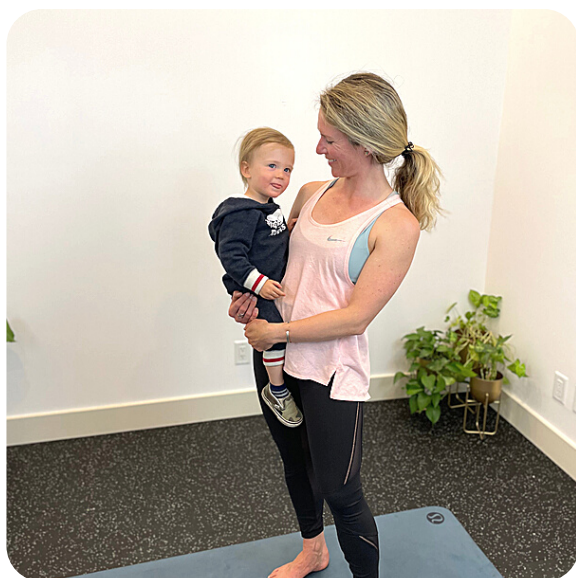


What you need  
to know to  
*safely & intelligently return  
to running postpartum*



A guide to help you  
take the guesswork  
out of returning  
to running postpartum



## About me! Who am I?!

Hey, I'm Nikki - Mum of two, Personal Trainer, Yoga Teacher, Certified Pre and Post-Natal Fitness Specialist, Body Ready Method Certified Pro, Pelacore Instructor and Founder of the online [Babes 'n Bellies Bootcamp](#) and the [Postpartum Fitness Program](#).

I work with pregnant and postpartum women to help prep their bodies for birth, and then help ease them back to their favourite activities postpartum.

Since having my first son and spontaneously going into labour prematurely, I have a passion for helping women optimize their pelvic floor and core health so they can feel like themselves again.

When my water broke 6-weeks early at 2 am in September 2019, I was terrified. But because I had thankfully prepped my body for birth and done the research, I knew exactly what I wanted and was fortunate experience a birth that was very close to what I had hoped for.

I am not telling you this to brag. I am telling you this because I want to prevent women from ever saying "I wish someone I told me."

In this mini e-book, I provide a summary of the Returning to Running Postnatal guidelines, and let me tell you it doesn't have to be all about just sitting there doing kegels!

With love & fitness,

*Nikki*

Nikki Johnston

Founder of the [Babes 'n Bellies Bootcamp](#) & [The Postpartum Fitness Program](#).



## RETURN TO RUNNING SUMMARY

In March 2019, a group of prominent pelvic health physiotherapists from around the world collaborated to publish evidence-based guidelines on return running postpartum.

The guidelines are public and can be read here.

Since many women love to run, this is a question that comes up often: "when can I return to running postpartum?"

Here is a summary of the guidelines from "Returning to Running Postnatal - Guidelines for Medical, Health and Fitness Professionals Managing this Population"

### **Summary**

"Running is a high impact sport placing a lot of demand on the body. In a recent systematic review investigating urinary incontinence in female athletes, high impact exercise was found to have a 4.59 fold increased risk of pelvic floor dysfunction compared to low impact exercise."

- Tom Goom, Grainne Donnelly and Emma Rockwell, 2019

## RETURN TO RUNNING SUMMARY - CONT'D

Goom, Donnelly and Rockwell recommend a low impact exercise program during the first 3 months postpartum, followed by a return to running between 3-6 months postnatal, at the earliest.

The authors also recommend seeking a pelvic health assessment by a qualified physiotherapist to evaluate strength, function and co-ordination of the abdominal and pelvic floor muscles which are often impacted by pregnancy and delivery.

Goom, Donnelly and Rockwell advise not to return to running prior to 3 months postnatal, especially if pelvic floor dysfunction has been identified prior to or after a return to running.

### **What constitutes pelvic floor dysfunction?**

- Heaviness/ dragging in the pelvic area (can be associated with prolapse)
- Leaking urine or inability to control bowel movements
- Pendular abdomen or noticeable gap along the midline of your abdominal wall. (This may indicate Diastasis Rectus Abdominis (DRA)).
- Pelvic or lower back pain
- Ongoing or increased blood loss beyond 8 weeks postnatal that is not linked to your monthly cycle

### **What are risk factors for return to running?**

- be less than 3 months postpartum
- have pre-existing hypermobility conditions like Ehlers-Danlos
- be breastfeeding
- have pre-existing pelvic floor dysfunction or lumbo pelvic dysfunction
- be obese
- caesarian section or perineal scarring
- psychological issues which may predispose the postnatal mother to inappropriate intensity or duration of running as a coping strategy



## RETURN TO RUNNING SUMMARY - CONT'D

### How do I determine if I can return to running?

A pelvic floor physiotherapist will conduct an assessment using objective measures of pelvic floor strength, in addition to the following impact load assessment and strength testing.

In addition, you should be able to do the following without pain, heaviness, dragging or incontinence. This is a "Load and Impact Assessment" that a pelvic health physiotherapist might conduct with you.

- Walking 30 minutes
- Single leg balance 10 seconds
- Single leg squat 10 repetitions each side
- Jog on the spot 1 minute
- Forward bounds 10 repetitions
- Hop in place 10 repetitions each leg
- Single leg 'running man': opposite arm and hip flexion/extension (bent knee) 10 repetitions each side

### Strength testing

In order to ensure key muscle groups are prepared for running, each of the following movements should be performed with the number of repetitions counted to fatigue. Aim for 20 repetitions of each test. Again, this is a strength test that a physiotherapist might conduct with you to determine your strength levels.

- Single leg calf raise
- Single leg bridge
- Single leg sit to stand
- Side lying abduction

**Note:** "Weakness in these areas of strength testing should not be considered a barrier for return to running but instead identify where strength work can be directed."

## RETURN TO RUNNING SUMMARY - CONT'D

In addition, other factors to consider before returning to running include weight (impact on joints), fitness level, breathing (start running slowly as breathing impacts core and pelvic floor function, psychological status, DRA, sleep quality, breastfeeding, and supportive wear should all be considered for a holistic approach to being “run ready”.

### **Where do I start?**

Start doing small intervals, around 1-2 minutes at an easy pace, establishing short term goals like distance and time, and long term goals like competing in a race.

Build volume (distance and time) before increasing intensity (speed, elevation).

Total weekly running distance/time should not be increased by more than around 10% per week.

The authors suggest:

“Including walk breaks can be helpful to reduce fatigue initially and can be gradually reduced and removed. A ‘couch to 5km’ programme can be helpful as this usually includes walk breaks and builds gradually towards 5km of running within around 9 weeks. Programmes vary but the NHS ‘couch to 5km’ starts with 3 runs in week 1 beginning with a brisk 5 minute walk then alternating 1 minute of running with 90 seconds of walking for a total of 20 minutes.”

### **Running with a Stroller**

The authors recommend that women do not consider running with a stroller until their baby is at least 6-9 months old (as per manufacturers guidelines). Further, that when women do start buggy-running, the buggy is designed for running and the woman commences slowly, in a graded fashion, initially using the 2 handed technique. A strength and stretch program for spine, pelvis, and hips should also be undertaken.

Contact:  
nikkijb@seatoskyfit.com  
604-770-2006  
IG: @mikkijfitness.

## 0-5K SAMPLE RETURN TO RUN PROGRAM

Week	# of runs	Sample Intervals	Total Distance	Total Approx Time
1	3	1 min run: 90s walk	1.5 kms	15 minutes
2	3	1 min run: 60s walk	1.65 kms	16.5 minutes
3	3	75s run: 50s walk	1.81 kms	18 minutes
4	2	90s run: 40s walk	2kms	20 minutes
5	2	2 min run: 30s walk	2.5 kms	22 minutes
6	1-2	150s run: 20s walk	3 kms	24 minutes
7	1-2	3 min run: 10s walk	3.5 kms	26.5 minutes
8	1	-	4 kms	29 minutes
9	1	-	5 kms	32 minutes

Above is a sample 0-5k Return to Run program you can follow to gradually build up to 5 K.

This plan is based on recommendations from the "Returning to running Postnatal" international guidelines.

### Remember:

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, please ease off the program by diminishing your distance and time, and contact your pelvic health provider.

### Four Ps:

- 1) Pressure in the pelvic floor
- 2) Peeing your pants
- 3) popping/oming
- 4) pain in the pelvis or elsewhere

### Thanks

I hope this guide has been helpful and will inspire to ease back into running without fear or any discomfort. Happy trails!

*Coach Nikki xox*

P.S. For more support on your postpartum fitness journey, check out my Postpartum Fitness Program, and email me to chat and see if the program might be a good fit for you!

Contact:  
nikkijb@seatoskyfit.com  
604-770-2006  
IG: @seatoskyfitness.