7 Unsafe Exercises for Women with Prolapse & after Prolapse Surgery

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Are you trying to exercise with prolapse problems?

Do you worry that your exercises might cause repeat prolapse after prolapse surgery?

Unfortunately many commonplace exercises for women can worsen prolapse problems and knowing how to choose safe exercises can be challenging.

This Pelvic Floor Physiotherapist information teaches you:

- 7 unsafe exercises for women with prolapse problems; and
- How to modify these exercises to keep exercising safely.

7 Unsafe Exercises for Women

1. Deep Weighted Squats



Avoid Unmodified Deep Weighted Squats

Deep weighted wide leg squats are commonly performed strength exercises for women. Squats strengthen and tone the thighs and buttocks.

The deeper you squat with your legs apart the greater the downward load on your pelvic floor.

Adding resistance to your upper body during your squats increases the load on your prolapse.

Some potentially unsafe variations of weighted squats include:

- Wide Stance Barbell Squat (shown above)
- Wide Stance Dumbbell Squat (heavy dumbbell held to chest during deep wide stance squat)
- Kettle bell squat (shown above)
- Body weight squat jump (jump off ground after deep squat)



Mini Squat Modification

How to Modify Squats

Regular squats are readily modified into pelvic floor safe squats. Here are some alternative leg strength exercises you may like to try:

- Mini squats (shown here)
- Ball to back wall squat
- Lunges with dumbbell weights rested against your hips
- Exercise ball to wall lunges

2. Star Jumps

Star jumps are high impact fitness cardiovascular exercises.

Star Jumps load your pelvic floor every time you land. If your pelvic floor can't withstand this repeated loading, it will be forced downwards along with your prolapse or prolapse repair.

How to Modify Star Jumps

Modify Star Jumps to low impact fitness exercises_stepping side to side or by touching one foot to the side at a time always keeping at least one foot in contact with the ground. Move your arms out to the side as you would do in a regular star jump to promote your fitness.

3. Men's Push Ups



Avoid Men's Push Ups

Men's push ups involve lying face down supporting the entire body weight through the hands and the feet.

Men's push ups are upper body, chest and abdominal muscles strength exercises for women.

Lifting your body weight with your arms increases downwards pressure on your pelvic floor and prolapse repair.

How to Modify Men's Push Ups

Men's push ups can be modified to be pelvic floor friendly with:

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- Wall push ups (feet close to the wall)
- Ball wall push ups (hands on a ball against a wall)
- Kneeling women's push ups (shown here)

How to do Kneeling Women's Push Ups?

- 1. Place your hands directly under shoulders and your knees directly under your hips, keep both feet in contact with the ground.
- 2. Lower your nose towards the ground between your hands or slightly in front of your hands as you breathe in and then breathe out as you return your body back to starting position.

Note: If you do kneeling push ups with your knees placed behind your hips body rather than directly beneath the hips will increase pelvic floor loading by involving the strong upper abdominal muscles – to eliminate this pressure keep your knees directly beneath your hips.

4. Resisted Core Abdominal Exercises



Avoid Resisted Core Exercises

There are many forms of resisted and unsafe abdominal core exercises in women's gyms and fitness classes. Resisted core exercises are usually promoted as tummy flattening exercises and most of us now know that these exercises won't flatten your belly.

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Resisted abdominal exercises increase the downward pressure on the pelvic floor. If your pelvic floor can't withstand this pressure it is forced downwards potentially worsening prolapse or contributing to repeat prolapse after surgery.

Resisted core abdominal exercises for women to avoid include:

- **Abdominal resistance machines** (shown here)
- Weighted sit ups or crunches (dumbbell/weighted plate/medicine ball)
- Incline sit ups (where the head down position increases the effort required by the abdominal muscles)
- Hanging leg raises (knees to chest)
- Abdominal rollout exercises (with roller or barbell)
- **Cable crunch** (kneeling weighted rope pull down)
- **Exercise ball roll in (body forwards over the ball in push up position and ball is rolled** into body as the knees are bent towards the chest)



Seated Exercise Ball Core Exercises

How to Modify Core Abdominal Exercises

Modify resisted core abdominal exercises to protect your pelvic floor by eliminating the resistance in favour of more appropriate abdominal core exercises for women. The type of abdominal core you choose will vary according to the strength and support provided by your pelvic floor.

Pelvic floor safe abdominal core exercises include:

- Seated exercise ball abdominal core exercises (shown above)
- Appropriate floor-based Pilates exercises including Bent Knee Fall Outs, Heel Slides
- Modified Full Plank by kneeling and toes down (suited to some but not all women)

5. Dead Lift Exercise



Avoid Unmodified Dead Lifts

The Dead Lift is one of the strength exercises for women you will often see in barbell strength training classes. The Dead Lift strengthens a number of areas of the body including: back, shoulder, leg and buttock muscles.

When performed with the wrong technique the Dead Lift exercise can overload your prolapse and your lower back.

Dead Lift technique typically involves:

- Holding a weighted barbell in front of your hips with your legs in wide leg stance position
- Leaning forwards and lowering the barbell along the thighs and shins
- Returning back to upright standing

How to Modify Dead Lifts

Dead lift can be modified to reduce pelvic floor loading by using the pelvic floor safe strength training guidelines and the following modified technique:

- Stand with feet no wider than shoulder width apart
- Hold a light dumbbell outside each thigh with your palms facing backwards
- Lower the dumbbells to just above the outside of your knees by bending your legs. Keeping the inward curve in your lower back and sticking your bottom out behind
- Breathe out as you return back to stand upright

6. Leg Press Exercises



Avoid Leg Press Exercise Machines

Leg press exercises strengthen the thighs and buttocks. Leg press machine involves moving a load or resistance by bending and extending the legs. Leg press machines are commonly found in women's gyms, circuit classes and fitness centre.

All the variations of Leg Press exercises listed below have potential to strain the pelvic floor, thereby worsening prolapse problems or contributing to recurrent prolapse after surgery. Leg press machines can also strain the lower back.

Leg press machine exercises for women commonly include:

- Standing leg press (the load is placed on the shoulders and a weighted squat is performed)
- Seated leg press (the load is moved by extending the hips and legs)
- Incline leg press (the load is moved by extending the hips and legs)



Bridging Exercise

How to Modify Leg Press Exercises

Leg Press machine exercises should be avoided by most women with prolapse problems, especially those with a history of prolapse surgery. Modify your exercise program to include pelvic floor safe alternatives to strengthen your legs and buttocks including:

- Bridging exercise (shown here)
- Ball to back wall squat with dumbbells
- Mini squats with dumbbells
- Lunge with dumbbells

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7. Burpees

Burpees are a fast track exercise to overloading your prolapse if your pelvic floor is weak!

Burpees are often included in Boot Camp exercises for women for whole body strengthening and fitness

Burpees involve these repeated exercises:

- Squat down to place hands on the ground
- Thrust both of the legs out behind the body
- Perform a Men's Push Up
- Jump the legs forward towards the body
- Jump vertically to complete the exercise

Half Burpees involve the same repeated moves without the full Men's Push Ups and these are not a pelvic floor safe alternative.

How to Modify Burpees

Almost every component of this exercise has the capacity to increase loading on the pelvic floor and modifying to half Burpees will not do anything towards protecting your prolapse.

Burpees are definitely one of those exercises for women with prolapse problems to avoid completely after prolapse surgery!

Key Points on Unsafe Exercises for Women

Unfortunately attending a women's gym or fitness class doesn't assure pelvic floor safe exercises for women with prolapse problems. To avoid prolapse worsening or repeat prolapse after your surgery avoid exercises with the potential to overload your pelvic floor through repeated high impact or heavy loading.

By modifying the exercises listed in this article or choosing pelvic floor safe alternative exercises you can improve your ability to keep exercising long-term, decrease prolapse symptoms and reduce the likelihood of your prolapse problems worsening because of your well-intentioned exercise program.

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