

a guide on returning to exercise after miscarriage

pre & postnatal strength

Firstly, I am so sorry that you are going through this & you're found yourself here.
I hope that this guide will provide some level of support or guidance to you over the coming days and weeks.

It wasn't until my own experience with miscarriage that I realised how difficult dealing with the physical process can be, alongside the emotional loss.

During that time, I encountered a real lack of guidance around returning to exercise post miscarriage, and it was something I really wanted more advice and support on.

Since then, I've gathered as much information as I can, coupled with my personal experience, to create this guide and hopefully help others going through something similar.

Before you read on:

There is no single timeline for this. There is no generic step by step program to follow.

This isn't a rulebook, but a guide that I hope gives you some information on finding a way to start - whenever you are ready for that.

Please remember that nothing will replace the guidance you receive from your own doctor / team who know your individual circumstances. This guide is intended to help you, not replace any professional advice you may receive.

Physical Readiness & Emotional Readiness

You may feel physically ready long before you feel emotionally ready - or vice versa. Neither is wrong, and both are important to listen to.

For many, exercise can be one of the things that helps you to feel like yourself again. It may be something that helps you to feel less broken, and even help with feelings of grief.

But timing matters - and so do your expectations. Be open to starting slowly again, even if only for the first couple of days to give yourself the chance to come back.

Step One: Medical Clearance

Before starting anything structured, it's worth checking in with your medical team for guidance and reassurance that there is no reason you cannot return to exercise at this time. This is especially important if:

- You're still experiencing bleeding or spotting
- Your loss occurred after 12 weeks
- You had a surgical procedure (eg. D&C) as part of your care
- You were managing any complications alongside the loss (eg. blood pressure issues, excess bleeding, etc)
- You feel you may need to speak to a Pelvic Floor specialist before returning to any load bearing exercise

If none of those apply to you, and you have the general "all-clear" - then a gradual reintroduction to your training is safe whenever you feel ready, both physically and emotionally.

Timing

The elements noted previously are more important than simply knowing what week you were in when the loss occurred, and while I don't want to break this into strict, specific programs depending on the timing, I do feel it's important to share the below guidance.

Trimester 1 Loss:

Your body has undergone a smaller amount of physical change during this time, meaning that **physically** you may be able to return to structured training sooner. The average time to return can be approx 1 - 2 weeks.

You should still start with a lower intensity than your normal, but you will likely be able to make a quicker return (provided you had no other complications, and no medical intervention).

It is still important to pay attention to your energy levels, and if you have any lingering or worsening symptoms like bleeding, cramping, or any sharp pains that may warrant further investigation.

Trimester 2 Loss:

During this time, your body has started to make significant changes, and therefore you will likely have a greater amount of physical recovery to allow for. The average time to return may be approx 1-4 weeks, depending on individual circumstances.

In this stage, you can return to strength training but it is important to allow yourself to take a slight step backwards and work through a more gradual return. Working with lighter weights, a focus on quality of movement and tempos are all a good option to choose over high intensity / high load sessions in the first weeks here.

I would recommend spending a little more time in the initial recovery phase (see below), or at least to continue elements around core and pelvic floor health as you increase your activity levels to support your body as best you can.

Trimester 3 Loss:

By this stage, your body has undergone very significant changes and your rehabilitation will be similar to or the same as that of a full postpartum return. This is incredibly difficult to accept, and you may not feel that you are in that place. It's important to acknowledge that your body has been through all or almost all of the work, changes, and stresses of pregnancy (and delivery) by this point, and it will need to recover appropriately.

The average time to return may be closer to 4-6+ weeks, depending on individual circumstances.

**The emotional readiness at this stage is also a major element to recognise and may take considerably longer. Do not rush yourself - wait until you feel ready and able, not just that you feel you should be.*

Once you do feel that you are ready to get back to some exercise, and have the all-clear from your medical team (highly advisable to also seek expert advice from a Pelvic Health Specialist at this stage), you will need to follow a gradual return.

I have given some broad recommendations below, but would also strongly advise you to consider working with a qualified coach in a 1:1 setting when getting started.

If you don't already have a coach in your gym / circle, it may be worth searching for a qualified pre/postnatal specialist in your area or online. The important thing is to have at least one person (Pelvic Health Physio / Coach / Online Coach) who you can share information with and feel supported by while you need it.

*see summary table 1.1 below

The Framework

*this is deliberately broad - principles, not a program.

Stage One: recover, rest & gentle movement

Focus: Reconnecting with breath, movement and just getting started.

I know, some of you are thinking - boring! You're thinking, this isn't a start. But it is. Even if it's only one session here - **start here.**

- Walking
- Stretching
- Breathwork
- Yoga

The goal isn't fitness - it's doing *something*.

Bridging the space between nothing, and returning.

Stage Two: re.building the foundations

Focus: Core & Pelvic Floor, Functional Movement

This is where you might feel like you are starting to do something more structured, or taking a step towards your normal. Some of you will be here on session 2, some on session 10. That's ok - you're here when you feel ready to be here.

- **Allow yourself to take a step back** to start & build from
- Focus on consistency & quality rather than intensity
- Light resistance work (*light is subjective, depending on your previous training status)
- Return to *your own* training style
- Maintain attention to your core and pelvic floor through breathing patterns
- Be open to having a few "easy sessions" here before pushing yourself to the next stage

Stage Three: return to strength

Focus: Return to structured programming, progress & higher loads.

When the foundations feel solid to you, you can start that return to your structured strength training, and return to higher intensity, loads and reps. This is where a proper program or coach matters & can help ensure you maintain the progress you've made and can continue through your training safely.

Outside of the above, it's also really important to trust yourself and know that while this has been a very difficult process, you are capable. You're not broken, and you can continue to get stronger and fitter than before.

You don't need a special program forever, but to give yourself the best chance at a full recovery it is best to accept that for a time initially, your training will look different.

Signs to Stop and Seek Help

- New or worsening bleeding
- Pain - pelvic, abdominal or lower back
- Dizziness, faintness, or unusual breathlessness
- A feeling of heaviness or pressure in the pelvic floor
- Anything that simply feels wrong for your body

*see summary table 1.2 below

Further Support:

If you would like to seek further support and speak to someone, I have listed below some organisations that offer peer support, helplines, and information specific to miscarriage in Ireland.

Miscarriage Association Of Ireland

- miscarriage.ie
- Peer support meetings
- Helpline: 0873656887 (10am-12pm) / 0870554382 (8pm-10pm)

Feileacain

- feileacain.ie
- Support for anyone affected by pregnancy or baby loss
- Supportline: (085) 249 6464

Final Note:

I hope this guide has been somewhat helpful for you to refer to and take guidance from during this time. If you have any questions or comments, my emails (heather@rebuildtraining.ie) or Instagram DMs (@heatherrolo) are always open.

Lastly - I will never reach out to you to sell any Pregnancy or Postnatal Program, but if you do in the future need some guidance in this area, I will have up to date resources and program information available on my website at rebuildtraining.ie and would love to hear from & help you if or when you need it.

Heather
re.build

Summary Tables

1.1 - Timing (Guidance based on Trimester in which loss occurred)

Loss Stage	Physical Return Timeline (estimate)	Focus
Trimester 1	1-2 Weeks	Lower intensity to begin, gradual reintroduction
Trimester 2	1-4 Weeks	Step back - lighter loads, movement quality, core / pelvic floor focus
Trimester 3	3-6 Weeks	Treat as full postpartum return

1.2 - Return to Exercise Framework

STAGE	Focus	Example	Notes
1	Recovery & Movement	Walking, Yoga, Stretching	Core, Pelvic Floor & Breath connection.
2	Rebuilding Foundations	Return to resistance, but lower intensity, load & volume.	Step back - make it feel like it's easy.
3	Return to Strength	Increase intensity & load.	Return to your normal & beyond!