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Avoiding urinary incontinence: The role of the midwife in advising pregnant and post-partum women on an appropriate exercise program

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Urinary incontinence affects around a third of all postpartum women, this figure is higher for those experiencing vaginal delivery. Further to that, a majority of women experience some level of urinary incontinence as they age. Almost half of women who practice an intense sport also suffer from some degree of stress urinary incontinence. This condition can have an overall negative impact on a woman's health by making it more difficult and uncomfortable to lead an active and healthy lifestyle and therefore make a maximum contribution to family life. The midwife is uniquely positioned to educate women at a particularly vulnerable time in their lives to develop practices that will help to shield them from this embarrassing condition. It is well known that the postpartum healing process cannot be hurried, but beginning the right exercise regime as soon as possible after delivery is critically important to the new mother's long-term pelvic health. This presentation outlines the major types of incorrect exercises and sports for the first six months to one year after childbirth, explaining the irreversible damage caused to the pelvic area and diastasis, with the resultant risk of ongoing urinary incontinence and prolapse. Further, it will outline in detail Christina's unique "Five Star Exercise Program" for postpartum women: Body posture, pelvic posture, pelvic floor muscles, correct abdominal muscles and correct breathing. A major advantage of this easy and comfortable program is that women in any physical condition (including overweight and obese) can participate and be benefited.

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