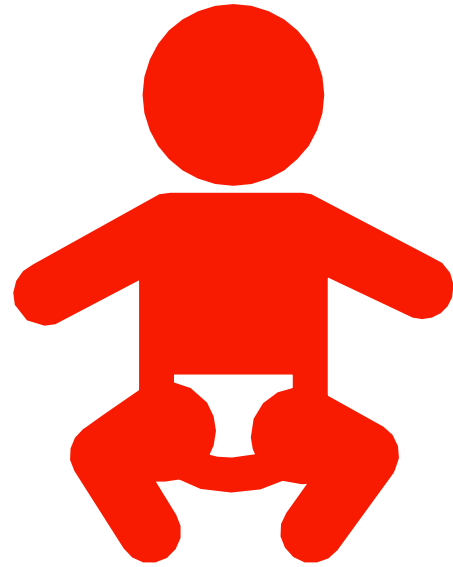




## MODULE 2

### Postpartum Exercise



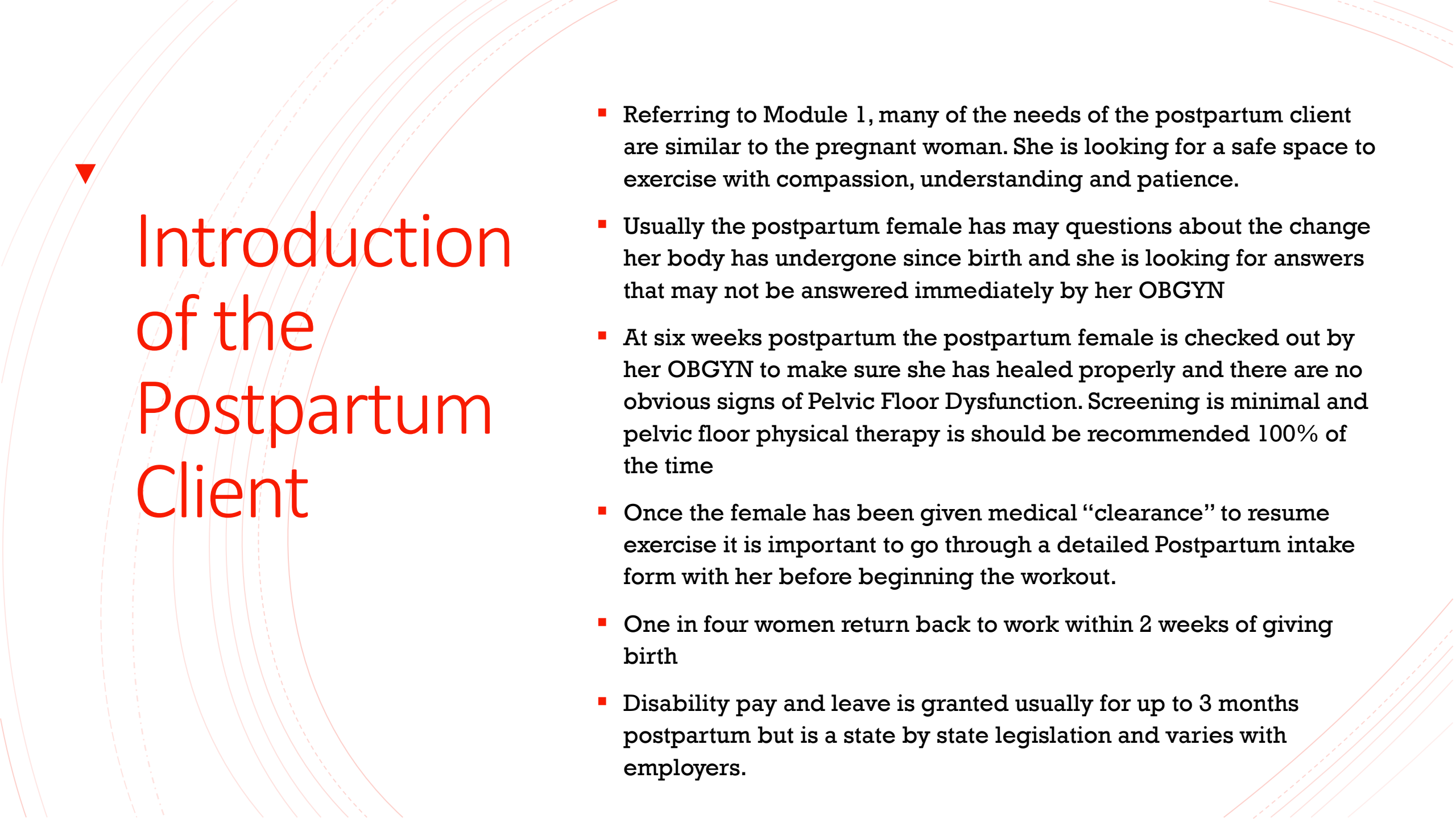
Postpartum Lesson 1  
Postpartum Defined and Introduction

# What's included:

- Postpartum defined
- Introduction to postpartum client
- Timeline



- The postpartum phase starts immediately after birth and has been termed the “fourth stage of labor”
- There are three distinct phases:
- Phase one involves the first 6–12 hours after birth . This is a time of rapid change with a potential for immediate crises such as postpartum hemorrhage, uterine inversion, amniotic fluid embolism, and eclampsia.
- Phase two begins around the week 2 and lasts until week 6. During this phase, the body is still undergoing major changes in terms of healing from childbirth, normalizing of hormones, dealing with perineal discomfort and postpartum depression.
- Phase three is the delayed postpartum period, which can last up to 6 months or longer. This is the time of restoration of muscle tone and connective tissue to the prepregnant state.



# Introduction of the Postpartum Client

- Referring to Module 1, many of the needs of the postpartum client are similar to the pregnant woman. She is looking for a safe space to exercise with compassion, understanding and patience.
- Usually the postpartum female has many questions about the change her body has undergone since birth and she is looking for answers that may not be answered immediately by her OBGYN
- At six weeks postpartum the postpartum female is checked out by her OBGYN to make sure she has healed properly and there are no obvious signs of Pelvic Floor Dysfunction. Screening is minimal and pelvic floor physical therapy is should be recommended 100% of the time
- Once the female has been given medical “clearance” to resume exercise it is important to go through a detailed Postpartum intake form with her before beginning the workout.
- One in four women return back to work within 2 weeks of giving birth
- Disability pay and leave is granted usually for up to 3 months postpartum but is a state by state legislation and varies with employers.

# Physiology of postpartum

Vaginal bleeding up to 2 weeks pp

Uterus returns to pre-pregnancy size - 6 weeks pp

Weak abdominal muscles- 3 months

Effects of Relaxin- 12 weeks or longer if lactating

Healing of episiotomy or vaginal tearing- 6 weeks pp

Healing of cesarean c-section-6-8 weeks pp

Hormonal regulation-4-6 weeks pp

# Current views on postpartum exercise from the medical and fitness professions

- ▶ Even though ACOG agrees that exercise during postpartum is beneficial, there has always been a distinct lack of guidelines and direction for the postpartum population.
- ▶ ACOG guidelines are general and lack specificity and many doctors use this as their number one resource in prescribing exercise to the postpartum population.
- ▶ In mainstream fitness centers there are very few exercise programs specific to the postpartum population so many women end up taking exercise classes that do not meet the needs of the postpartum body or they forgo exercise altogether concerned about not knowing how to exercise properly and safely.
- ▶ No mandatory postpartum physical screening exists, although postpartum depression intervention and screening is becoming common practice in hospitals with The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale-(A ten-question survey used to screen potential PPD in new mothers).
- ▶ Other countries like France, Australia and Germany currently provide physiotherapy (PT) and other support in terms of Au Pair help, and 6 months to one-year paid leave and paternal leave for new mothers.



## Changing the way childbirth is viewed...

**Childbirth should be considered like any other surgery or injury. A treatment plan should be in place no matter what type of delivery the woman had and it should include pelvic floor physical therapy, proper exercise prescription and counseling on better nutritional practices to expediate healing.**



# Ideal “fourth trimester” Postpartum Protocol Timeline

- ▶ Days following birth: light walking for short durations
- ▶ 2 weeks postpartum: light diaphragmatic breath work may begin
- ▶ 4-6 weeks postpartum: gentle pelvic tilts, bridging and light stretching can resume
- ▶ 6 weeks postpartum: OBGYN clearance and referral for pelvic floor PT
- ▶ 6 weeks – 12 weeks postpartum: As long as no red flags exist, postpartum exercise may begin starting with functional movements, light strength training, swimming, and gentle core/pelvic floor integrative exercises
- ▶ 12 weeks postpartum to 6 months postpartum Phase 3 postpartum begins and she is no longer in the “4<sup>th</sup> trimester”, exercise intensity may increase although continue to consider:
  - ▶ If woman has been exercising consistently since birth
  - ▶ What kind of activity has she been doing postpartum
  - ▶ If she is receiving treatment for PFD or other injuries
  - ▶ How much sleep is she getting nightly

# Benefits of Postpartum Exercise

<b>Relieve</b>	Relieve Musculoskeletal Pain
<b>Assist</b>	Assist with weight loss
<b>Boost</b>	Boost confidence
<b>Increase</b>	Increase energy, endurance, strength and flexibility
<b>Reduce</b>	Reduce incidence of postpartum depression and enhance mood



# Myths of Postpartum Exercise

- Exercise affects lactation
- Kegels are the best way to exercise the pelvic floor muscles
- A woman can return to the same activities she engaged in pre-pregnancy at the 6-week clearance mark
- Crunches and sit ups will help strengthen the core
- Baby weight will “fall off” if you are breast feeding