

Officially, bottoms are getting bigger – research shows British women have bigger bottoms than other females in Europe...

I blame Joanne. If it wasn't for hers managing to strangulate itself perhaps I would not find myself in quite the predicament I find myself in today.

I developed a hernia, and because my sister Joanne had a complication with hers, I was advised not to ignore mine.

Worse, I found two days before the big 'o' that our sister Gilly has just the same and doesn't give it a moment of thought – and she is a nurse. Joanne and Gilly are my little sisters by four and eight minutes respectively and it is a defect we share, as it turns out (apparently umbilical hernias are common in triplets and twins).

Although I say this myself, my abdominal wall – where this minor blip has occurred – is practically reinforced with steel girders. But from nowhere the hernia arrived utterly unwelcomed following a cycling hill climb in July. Then it seemed like something of an adventure. Something to ponder over. It was decided because of Joanne's history and my lifestyle that it had to go.

So now, here I am being told to rest. Rest! This is not possible in my world. How easy it is to be sucked into self-doubt – you know yourself what you can and can't do, but listen too hard to those who know you least and you can be forgiven when you begin to lose your confidence.

An active body will not respond well if you suddenly cease to move. My health professional was happy to say 'stop' for six weeks without any understanding of what I do. I challenged that.

Research was required. I found that almost immediately after your surgery, you can begin doing one simple but very effective abdominal exercise: deep breathing. You can practice taking slow, deep breaths in and exhaling slowly and completely. Repeat this exercise for about four or five cycles in and out, once or twice per hour. This at the beginning will be the closest I will get to cycling. Deep breathing not only engages your abdominal muscles, it also reduces the risk of lung infections from shallow breathing.



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The abdominals are involved in nearly every activity you do; simply focusing on having good posture will engage your abdominal muscles, as will walking and climbing stairs.

Pelvic tilts also work the abdominals gently. Lie on your back on a soft mat with your knees bent. Gently engage your middle and press the full length of your spine into the floor without raising your hips.

Then let the curve of your spine lift off the floor. From the same starting position, you can also do a glute bridge, raising your pelvis gently toward the ceiling while keeping your shoulders on the floor. It feels great and releases your lower back – bliss.

So in our Olympian year of 2012 I intend to spend as little time as possible on my bottom even after this shaky start. Officially, bottoms are getting bigger – recent research shows British women have bigger bottoms than other females in Europe and that hip measurements are wider than they were 50 years ago.

Michelle Obama recently had hers analysed by a portly soul who felt hers was on the large side for someone promoting a 'let's move' campaign. He is missing the point – her shapeliness doesn't mean she is unfit. Far from it – many bottoms of

considerable size are a threat in the sporting world. The gluteus maximus is the strongest muscle in your body, and trained and used properly, it has the ability to produce a fearsome force. A good one is hardly going to be pathetically small – it is going to be mightily impressive.

So what are we to do? With an Olympian effort, we are going to become disciplined and motivated. We are going to stride on our walks and power up those stairs. We are going to be proud to have the biggest bottoms in Europe and we are going to show the world that they should be afraid, very afraid. ☺