

Safely returning to exercise after having a baby



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Whether you're a first time mum or a mother of five, pregnancy and childbirth has a huge impact on your body and should not be underestimated. The first six- twelve weeks (depending whether you had a vaginal birth or caesarean) after giving birth are a time of healing, re-balancing and recovery. You must honour what your body has gone through and all the work it has done to deliver your gorgeous bundle into this world.

In saying this being a mother of two and working with many postnatal women I completely understand the desire for mums to lose their baby weight and feel good in their post baby body. It can be very disheartening when you see other mums get back into their skinny jeans in what seems to be straight after giving birth.


Along with your desire to lose your baby weight, there are many benefits to starting an exercise regime including regaining strength, getting pelvic floor muscles functioning effectively and regaining your fitness.

So where do you start to ensure you honour your body and achieve your goals?

1. It is important to resume basic pelvic floor exercises as soon as possible.

pelvic tilt


- Lie on your back, knees bent, feet on the floor
- Place your baby on your hips or chest and tilt your pelvis inward, bringing your pubic bone toward your naval
- Squeeze your pelvic floor muscles and hold for 5 - 10 seconds
- Release hold

 BE SURE NOT TO SQUEEZE YOUR BUTT MUSCLES WHILST PERFORMING EXERCISE

reps
12 - 15

sets
1 - 2

middle
body
workout



babyweights

2. Put your bundle in the pram or a baby carrier and get out into fresh air for a walk, even if it's just while you're running errands, build up to 30 minutes low impact cardio 3-5 times a week.
3. Consult a physician before beginning any more challenging exercise program to make sure your body is ready and safe for exercise.
4. Make an appointment with a women's' health physiotherapist to check your pelvic floor and transversus abdominis functionality, as well to have your diastasis recti (abdominal separation) checked, as this may prevent you from safely performing certain exercises, especially abdominal exercises you may have been doing prior to pregnancy.
5. Avoid high impact exercise and be careful not to push too far when stretching until at least five months after birth. Relaxin can remain in your system for up to five months. While relaxin remains in the body, your joints are more fragile as there is less support from the surrounding tissue, ligaments and tendons.
6. Once you have the go ahead from your physician and physio start with low impact exercises, compound resistance exercises. These are exercises that use more than one muscle at a time and provide functional benefits. For example squats.

squat


- Hold your baby with his/her back against your chest
- Place one arm across your baby's chest and the other between your baby's legs
- Place your feet hip width apart and bend your knees to 90 degrees, placing weight into your heels
- Straighten your legs to return to starting position

⚠️ WHEN BENDING, MAKE SURE YOUR KNEES STAY BEHIND YOUR TOES

lower body workout

reps
10 - 20

sets
1 - 2



babyweights

The image is a rounded rectangular graphic with a white background and a thin grey border. At the top, the word 'squat' is written in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. Below it, there are four bullet points in a grey font, each preceded by a small grey dash. The first bullet point says 'Hold your baby with his/her back against your chest'. The second says 'Place one arm across your baby's chest and the other between your baby's legs'. The third says 'Place your feet hip width apart and bend your knees to 90 degrees, placing weight into your heels'. The fourth says 'Straighten your legs to return to starting position'. Below the bullet points, there is a warning icon (a small yellow triangle with an exclamation mark) followed by the text 'WHEN BENDING, MAKE SURE YOUR KNEES STAY BEHIND YOUR TOES' in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. In the bottom left corner, there are two overlapping circles. The larger one is orange and contains the text 'lower body workout' in white. The smaller one is white with an orange border and contains the text 'reps 10 - 20' and 'sets 1 - 2' in orange. In the bottom right corner, there is a photograph of a woman in a black top and leggings performing a squat while holding a baby in a black carrier. The woman is facing right, and the baby is visible in the carrier. The background of the photo is white. At the bottom left of the graphic, the word 'babyweights' is written in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font.

7. Build strength slowly. Using your baby as your resistance is the perfect way to do this as she/he gets slightly heavier each day. It is also most functional as this is the weight you have to carry around, lift in and out of cars, cots, etc.
8. Listen to your body. You must stop as soon as you feel any pain. Remember, everyone has a different starting point, depending on your pregnancy, your birth, your exercise history, etc. Be sure not to advance too quickly.

So next time you're trying to settle your baby use your time effectively by doing squats or when you are sitting on the floor with your baby and not sure what to do with him/her, try some push up kisses. It is the perfect way for mothers to look after themselves and their baby.



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