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POST NATAL INFORMATION

Congratulations! If you have just given birth, whether it is baby number one, number two, number three (or more!), it is a very special time. It is also a time to look after yourself, to make sure you are in the best possible health to look after your little one.

FITNESS FOR MUMMIES offer fun exercise classes designed specifically for post natal mums, to help you to regain your shape, strength and fitness, and with a big focus on posture and working those all-important abdominal and back muscles. Please contact us before attending your first class to check availability.

Benefits of post natal exercise classes

- Faster healing and recovery from the rigours of the birthing process
- Increase energy to cope with the demands of new motherhood
- Speedier return to your pre-pregnancy shape and level of fitness
- Increase calorie burning / fat loss
- Improve strength and flexibility
- Regain posture awareness
- Improve your pelvic floor!
- Look and feel better
- Improve self esteem
- Reduce stress and depression.
- Socialise and meet other mums and babies
- Workout in a non-threatening exercise environment where we are all in the same boat and working to similar goals: **"I want my body back!"**



When is it safe to start exercising after birth?

A physical recovery period is essential to ensure the uterus has retracted back into the pelvis, bleeding and discharge have ceased and stitches have healed. Initially after birth it is best to take it easy; resting and bonding with your baby is more important than putting on your trainers! However you can begin exercising your pelvic floor muscles. Also getting out and about is good for your physical and mental health, so try to take your baby out for light walks in his/her pram as soon as you feel up to it. Don't feel pressured to exercise before you are ready. **Listen to your body.**

Before commencing any exercise programme or post natal fitness class please always check with your GP / Midwife. It is recommended that after a natural vaginal birth you wait until after your 6 week post natal check by your GP / Midwife. If you had a caesarean it is recommended that you wait until 10 / 12 weeks after birth.

So what sort of things do I need to be aware of to avoid problems?

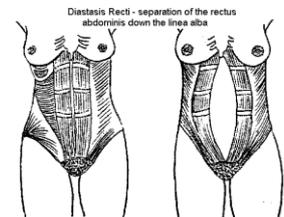
- Gentle exercises can be commenced at home in the first few weeks after the birth.
- Wait until you have had a satisfactory postnatal check-up before commencing more vigorous exercise.
- If you had a caesarean delivery it is advisable to wait ten to twelve weeks.
- Wear a good supporting bra to protect the breasts when exercising.
- Wear appropriate footwear for the activity.
- If you are breastfeeding, feed before exercising.
- Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after exercise.
- Don't exercise on an empty stomach.
- Incorporate exercise into your daily activities as much as possible.
- Swap your exercise session for a rest if you are feeling particularly tired.
- The level of exercise must be comfortable and achievable.
- It is advised to exercise at a low impact level during your initial post natal period.
- Recognize when your body has had enough.
- Stop immediately if pain is experienced or make adaptations if you feel uncomfortable.

How do I regain (re-train) my pre-pregnancy posture?

- Start pelvic floor exercises as soon as you can include some pelvic tilts and static abdominal contractions
- Start any exercise gradually, allowing yourself to build up over a number of weeks.
- Always warm up the body before doing more exercises, have water handy to drink, especially if you are breastfeeding and always stop when you feel your body has had enough.
- Try and take the baby for a walk in the pram or carry papoose and 'power' walk till you feel warm and your breathing is a little faster than normal.
- Pull in your deep tummy muscles (called transversus muscles) whenever you think about them - when walking along, when driving and stopping at the traffic lights, whenever you feed your baby.
- Structured exercise may take many forms – swimming, walking, postnatal exercise class. But it is a good idea to leave anything that creates 'impact' on your body until you are at least five months postnatal. Impact can be defined as taking both feet off the floor at the same time.
- If you can get to a specific postnatal exercise class you will meet other mothers with babies of the same age and you will probably find you have much in common. The class can be a really great way to meet others and develop new friendships at this time, especially if you can take your baby along too and afterwards go for a coffee in the cafe.

Abdominal Muscle Separation – is that normal?

Under the influence of relaxin the abdominal muscles undergo a tremendous amount of stretch during pregnancy. Sometimes the mid-line separates to allow more space for the growing uterus. This is known as diastasis recti – separation of the recti muscles and in quite common, occurring in 66% of women in the third trimester. As a result of the separation, the abdominal "corset" that normally provides support and stability to the lower back and pelvis is weakened, and this may contribute to back pain and weak abdominal muscles.



Abdominal Muscle Separation – Rec Check

Lying flat on your back, with your knees bent, place your fingers widthways across your abdomen, just below your navel. Slowly lift your head and shoulders. You should feel the firm edges of the abdominal muscles and measure this gap between them in finger widths. The separation may potentially start near the bottom of your bra and end after your belly button so it's best to test the full length of your abdominals.

Every woman varies but a separation of two finger width or less is classified as "normal".

If your abdominals are separated greater than two fingers and the tissue feels slack you must take care to avoid pressure on the abdominal muscles and begin low level abdominal training. (No Abdominal Crunches)

Exercises for your Abdominal Muscles

Your Transversus Abdominal is the most important tummy muscle to exercise after you have had a baby. The transversus abdominus works with your pelvic floor muscles to help support your back and pelvis. Exercising this muscle may help you to lose your 'pregnancy shape' and help to flatten your tummy.

Try this exercise at home to help gradually firm your stomach:

- Lie on your back or your side with your knees slightly bent. Or on all fours (see pic)
- Let your tummy sag and breathe in gently.
- As you breathe out, gently draw in the lower part of your stomach like a corset, narrowing your waistline.
- Pull up your pelvic floor at the same time.
- Hold for a count of 10 then gently release.



"The Complete Guide to Postnatal Fitness"

Many other Core stability and strength exercise will be taught during your postnatal exercise class.

This information sheet is put together by Fitness For Mummies Ltd.

If at any time you have any questions or concerns please do contact us, your GP, Midwife or Health Visitor.

Please call 0771 2051208 or email Vicky@fitnessformummies.co.uk before your first class to check availability or if you have any questions.

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