

## Post Natal Fitness

For all you new mums out there and I'm sure some of you more experienced ones as well, getting into shape after birth can feel like a real uphill struggle. The last thing you feel like doing is going to the gym!

So with my 12 years' experience in the health, fitness and the sports profession I hope to educate you through the fad diets and controversial exercise routines with regular articles to guide you to a happier, fitter and leaner you!

The quality of the exercise guidelines available online for immediate post natal mums is pretty good, so rather than repeating what you probably already know check out the links below for some researched exercise advice.

<http://www.babycentre.co.uk/baby/youafterthebirth/exercisepostbaby/isbodyready/>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/pregnancy/Pages/Exerciseafterpregnancy.aspx>

For me the key to getting or staying in shape after birth is to ensure you have a balance between the food you eat and the calories you burn– It's not rocket science, but you'll be surprised how many mothers unknowingly get it wrong.

A lot of emphasis is usually put on increasing the energy expenditure through exercise, however, I believe the most important element to sort out is your food consumption. It's much easier to eat a little less than have to spend more time burning it off, especially when time is at a premium.

By accumulating a 200 calorie deficit every day you could lose up to 21lbs (9.5kg) by the end of the year. That's the equivalent of cutting out a jacket potato, a 2 finger kitkat, a can of coke, a medium/large glass of wine. Whatever you consume, just try to cut the calories, either through eating a slightly healthier option, or if you do that already perhaps make a habit of leaving a mouthful of food at every mealtime.

Don't make the mistake of making huge changes to your food all at once. All you do is increase your cravings and increase the risk of failure. An even easier way to do it is by taking your child for a walk in its pram for 20 minutes a day plus cutting out just **100** calories. Just think, you could lose up to **42 lbs** in weight over a year– that's 3 stone - for very little effort. The key is consistency, the 200 calorie deficit needs to occur daily.

The beauty of making such small dietary changes also makes it **suitable** for **breast feeding** mums. As long you keep your fluids up (1.5-2 litres per day) and get plenty of fruit & vegetables (2-3 fruit; 3-4 vegetable) on a daily basis, your baby and you will be getting all the nutrition necessary to keep you fit and healthy.

It is of course very easy to say "just cut out a few calories and you can lose X amount of weight". In order for you to be successful, firstly look at the long term –

you need to get forget all these quick fix diets and boot camps - it's a marathon not a sprint. Just imagine yourself in a year's time. Scenario 1: 2 week crash diet, hated it, lost weight at the end of 2 weeks but 50 weeks later, weighing the same or in a high percentage of cases even higher. Scenario 2: 200 calorie deficit daily, 1lb loss at the end of 2 weeks but 42lbs after 1 year for minimal effort.

The key though is to allow the 200 calorie deficit to occur. Plan an hour of your time (rare I know!) undisturbed, to plan how you can get 15-20 minutes of fresh air every day. Also think about a contingency – how can you get 20 minutes of light exercise if you can't leave the house – stair walking, aerobics DVD etc. Lastly, research some new recipe ideas for the family and look to see where you can cut some calorie corners. Not huge ones, just enough to make a dent but still give you the enjoyment that should come from food – your life doesn't need to revolve around Weight Watchers ready meals and so called 'low fat' foods. All foods are fat foods if you eat too much of them!!

Hopefully this has given you some food for thought. If you have any questions or would like some recipe inspiration, check out my blog at [blog.sportsspecialist.co.uk](http://blog.sportsspecialist.co.uk) or feel free to contact me via email [info@the-fitness-specialist.co.uk](mailto:info@the-fitness-specialist.co.uk) or by phone 07867 535696.