

## BACK TO YOU (part 2)

With the weather finally improving, it brings with it the incentive to get healthy and exercise. So how can you, as a new mum fit exercise in to an already busy and ever changing routine? The key to exercising with a new baby in your life is little and often. Gone are the days where you can spend the morning or evening at the gym. The benefits of small chunks of exercise (mini workouts) mean that they can fit nicely into your baby's routine, you do not have to worry about childcare, they do not require large amounts of energy and done regularly will provide great results. In fact they are perfect for this time in your life. These exercises can be performed with or without your baby; however working out with this ever increasing bundle will make sure that you keep on challenging your body and seeing results.

Here's an example of how to introduce a mini workout into your day

Start by setting aside a 15 minute slot, every other day.

This can be increased to daily or even twice a day.

Focus on completing 2-3 sets of 8-10 repetitions.

Rest 1 minute between each exercise, gradually reduce this time.

If exercising with your baby, ensure they are dressed in snug fitting clothes such as a baby grow. To begin with do a few less repetitions until your baby gets use to movements. Using a sling will help you with balance, not to mention keeping your hands free. If exercising without your baby, get hold of some water bottles or tins of beans to use as alternative to buying weights.

What's stopping you taking this routine outside and enjoying the benefits of the out-doors at the same time? Either way exercise can be added into your routine in small manageable chunks. A few minutes extra during a nappy change can allow you to fit in some press ups, tricep dips, superman's, tummy draw-ins, donkey kicks, not to mention using feeding times to remember exercise your pelvic floor. Or even using tidy up time to add in a couple of squats or lunges while picking up toys from the ground. Before you know it you've managed to fit in a full body workout without the hassle of changing your routine.

Why not complement these mini workouts with some walking. Walking is low impact on the joints and can pretty much be done everywhere. Moreover your baby will benefit from fresh air. Begin with short walks on flat terrain, progressing to longer walks on varied terrain. Try walking at different tempos, walking quickly to next light post, and slowing pace again for recovery. Repeat this routine, varying distance and reducing recovery time. Use the hills around you, hill walking is great for toning legs and bottoms. Have a look at your buggy, make sure it is set up at the right height; shoulders should not be raised or stooped. Using a sling or a baby back pack will also vary your workout. Make sure you bring some water for yourself and an extra feed and change of clothes for baby. The last thing you want to do is have to come home if you are enjoying some lovely weather.

### **Outside safety:**

**Sunscreen and a hat is a must for you and baby!**

**Drinks: don't neglect yourself and make sure you always have an extra feed for baby.**

**Umbrella: this can be a handy piece of equipment during sun and rain.**

**Snacks for mum: fruit or nuts offer a quick healthy snack if staying out a little longer.**

**Change of clothes for baby**

**Mobile: very useful in case of emergency. So long as your mobile is turned on the emergency service can locate you if necessary.**

Exercising with your baby gives you more time to bond with them. Those happy hormones produced during exercise will help combat even the toughest day spent on your own with your baby.

Still not enough? Do you feel you need the company of others and guidance of an instructor to help keep you motivated? The good news is that new classes are popping up all the time, as the fitness industry catches up with all these new mums who want to exercise and take care of their bodies. Here are some of the different types of classes available in your area:

Mum and Baby class: Strengthen and tone your body while exercising with your baby. Suitable for mums with babies from 8 weeks to 6-8 months.

Buggy Class: This involves 3-5 mile walks at various paces, combined with exercises to strengthen and tone. Suitable for babies and toddlers of buggy age.

Body Conditioning/ Circuit Class: Baby gets to sit and watch while you strengthen and tone your body, with emphasis on those deep tummy muscles. Suitable for mums following postnatal check.

Mum and Baby yoga: This combines yoga based movements and stretches to help recondition your body after childbirth. These classes also combine gentle yoga stretches with a mix of rhythm and music for baby to aid with sleep. Suitable following postnatal check.

Postnatal Pilates: Builds strength from within, initiating every movement through engaging your deep abdominals and stabilising your torso. Suitable following postnatal check.

Pelvic floor classes: These classes take you through a step by step approach to gradually strengthen and tone the pelvic floor and help reduce those baby pouches. Suitable from 4 weeks.

If money is tight, check and see what your local Children's Centre has to offer. Most Centres are now offering some form of exercise class to mums with children under 5. Many local councils also work with their Children Centres to offer Buggy walks.

Remember exercise does not have to be about spending huge amounts of time pushing yourself to the point of exhaustion. Small regular amounts are just as effective during this period of your life. Having a healthy attitude to exercise and your energy levels with a new baby will mean that you are more likely to maintain what you started. The end goal being a fitter, happier, healthier mum!