



## BEYOND THE BELLY

### FITNESS FOR THE NEW MOM

There is no day in life that quite compares to the day you bring home your new baby for the first time. The knowledge that the beautiful little person laying in your arms comes from you can be so rewarding but at the same time very overwhelming. Those first months bring you (and by you, I mean *all* Moms!) great joy, extreme exhaustion and very little time for yourself. Just the very thought of throwing exercise into the mix may push a new mom over the edge.

But you can incorporate exercise into your routine. Here are some tips for getting started:

#### **Postpartum Recovery (The first 2- 6 weeks)**

Moms who've had a Caesarean or traumatic vaginal delivery, please consult with your doctor before proceeding any exercise program.

A good postpartum recovery program may look include the following but will vary based on need. [Consult a certified perinatal fitness specialist.](#)

#### **Exercises**

1. Pelvic Floor/Kegels - These muscles (the ones that you use to control your pee) loose elasticity during pregnancy due to pressure from the growing fetus as well as from stretching during vaginal birth. Try 2 – 3 sets of 20 (holding each muscle contraction from 1-2 seconds increasing the length of time as your strength improves). These exercises are crucial to regaining the strength of these muscles and avoiding incontinence. Begin these exercises soon after delivery to increase circulation and promote healing.
2. Adductor/Abductor- Begin by lying on your side, resting your top leg in front of the bottom. Lift the bottom leg up and down slowly for 3 sets of 20. Do the same with the top leg. Afterwards switch sides. (Great exercise to do while breastfeeding in a side lying position.)
3. Shoulder Rotation - This area is a source of stress for mothers due to muscle lengthening as a result of increased breast size and breastfeeding postures. Try this exercise while sitting. It will remind you to correct your posture and strengthen this muscle group at the same time. Lift your shoulders and rotate them backwards then squeeze your shoulder blades together. Drop back to normal position and repeat. Try 3 sets of 20.
4. Abdominals (Isometric) – Breathe in and with a forced exhalation, suck in your abdominals. Hold your abdominals (not your breath) in this position for 3 seconds, increasing to ten. Try 3 sets of 20.



5. Pelvic Tilts - Lie on your back with your knees bent. Press the small of your back into the floor while simultaneously lifting your pelvic bone towards your belly button.

### **After Your Postpartum Check Up**

Once you've been seen by your physician for your postpartum check up, you can now begin a more challenging fitness program.

The best solution is to find a program you can do with other moms. This will provide a network of support for you and socialization for baby. An exercise program that is designed just for moms and new babies should address general concerns related to being a new mom as well as fitness related issues.

- Make sure your class is led by a certified fitness instructor who has experience with prenatal and postnatal women.
- Still be kind and gentle to yourself.
- Remember that breastfeeding requires approximately 500 additional calories per day and exercise requires 100-150 per ½ hour of vigorous exercise.
- Consuming quality calories will provide your baby best odds while also providing you the nutrition and energy needed to be a busy new mom.
- Get adequate rest by going to bed early. Discipline in this area will help you feel better.

Most importantly, take it one day at a time!

Cheers  
Andrea