

# new year new you

Why—and how—you should make room for fitness

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If last year's New Year's Eve kiss brought on this year's bundle of joy, you may now be struggling with the extra bundle of weight that your little one left behind. Moms sacrifice everything for their babies, and the first thing they give up is usually their own body.

Looking at your bloated belly after your baby is born, you may think (heck—even hope) that there's another one still in there. But after spending nine months growing, you can't expect to shrink back to pre-baby size (or shape) in just weeks...or months...or even years.

"Having my clothes not fit was really discouraging at the beginning, and even when you can fit into your old clothes they don't fit the same way," says Katie Newman, a Metairie mother of three, ages four and under. Rebecca Wilmore of Metairie also credits weight loss as her primary motivation for working out after her now one-year-old daughter Adrianna was born. She says, "I didn't gain much weight while I was pregnant but I'm only five foot one so any weight I gain is noticeable."

For new moms, a trip to the bathroom isn't simple; a trip to the gym may seem as complex as a hurricane evacuation. Trying to stay in shape includes many additional complications such as post-partum problems, lack of time and energy, and then the question of what to do with the babies themselves.

## postpartum road bumps

Lisa George, a Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) and co-owner of Magnolia Physical Therapy in Harahan, cautions that the biggest challenges women face after having a baby are the change in posture and problems with body mechanics. "Picking up a nine pound baby in an infant carrier and getting them in

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out of a crib or car seat is not friendly to body," she warns. And women who don't work out regularly can face even bigger problems from years of poor body mechanics or posture, especially after multiple pregnancies.

Lisa suggests that postural re-education and core stabilization of your muscles are "imperative to any type of fitness regiment in order to prevent injuring or re-injuring yourself." The three-step program Lisa uses includes, first, dealing with any pain you might be experiencing; second, helping you come up with a regiment to re-establish correct posture; and third, assisting you with getting into your own exercise routine whether at a gym, with a trainer, through group classes or on your own.

Elmwood Fitness Center now offers a personal training program that specifically addresses post-partum issues. Jennifer Lormand, a personal trainer at Elmwood and mother of two, designed the program after spending a year sitting at home and researching "what would be my dream program." The program aims to decrease back pain by strengthening core muscles as well as pelvic floor muscles, offer a support system for moms, reduce body fat and increase self-esteem. Many of these problems cannot be healed by time alone.

"Three years down the line, if you haven't worked out consistently, you may still be dealing with the same issues as new moms," advises Jennifer. Whether your baby is six weeks or six years old, it is important to deal with any health problems or pain prior to establishing your exercise routine.

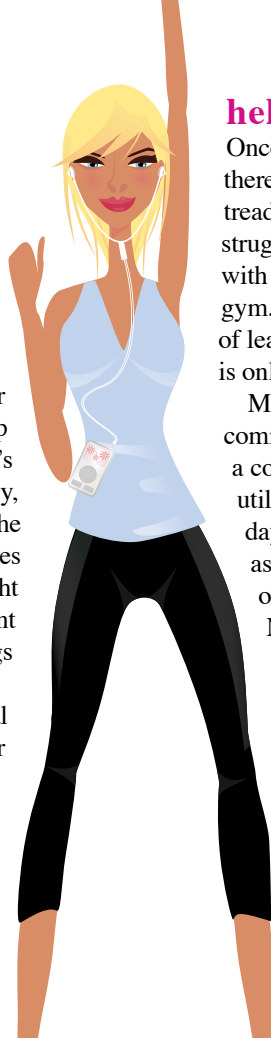
## ever-elusive: time and energy...

Okay, so you've passed your post-partum six-week waiting period

and your doctor gives you the okay. You should be good to go. But if your baby doesn't sleep, or you're working full-time, or you're running back and forth between the loads of laundry and burning leftovers, it's difficult to find even a few minutes for fitness. "It's very hard to squeeze it in between school activities and nap schedules and it's easy to find all of these excuses not to work out," says Katie.

Meghan Hays, a nationally certified personal trainer and group exercise instructor, advises that the first step is to find what personally motivates you, whether it's the feeling of accomplishment, the increase in energy, the change in attitude or of course the weight loss. She says, "One of the best feelings in the world comes when the number on the scale decreases, your tight clothes finally fit, and you know that your commitment to fitness (and yourself) is what made those things happen."

From the gym to the jazzercise class, the personal trainer to the pilates instructor, the avenues for exercise are endless, as are the benefits. Rebecca notices, "When I don't go to the gym, I definitely don't feel as good. It helps me feel energetic and focused, and it's great stress relief." For Katie, "It's a good escape...it puts me in a better mood, gives me more energy and I'm nicer the rest of the day."



## hello? the baby...

Once your spirit is willing and even your flesh is willing, there is still one hurdle to hop before you can tear up the treadmill....what to do with the little one. Many moms struggle with the idea of leaving their precious new baby with their own mother, much less childcare at their local gym. Jennifer suggests, "We all have to get over that guilt of leaving your child and resign yourself to the fact that it is only one hour a day."

Most gyms let you try out their childcare before committing to a gym membership so you can be sure it is a comfortable option for you. Other possibilities include utilizing the before or after care options at your child's daycare, child-swapping with a friend, enlisting the assistance of an understanding relative, or working out your workouts around your spouse's schedule. Nowadays personal trainers and even group exercise class instructors are much more child-friendly.

Exercising regularly is also one more way for moms to give to their families, because the whole family benefits from mom's fitness. "Studies prove that when parents are active and eat healthy then their children grow up to be healthy, active adults because that is what they have been taught by example," says Jennifer. She continues, "It's the hardest things for a mom to take that 30 minutes to an hour but it's the best thing you can do for your marriage and your kids." 🌸