

NUTRITIONAL ADVICE



E-BOOK FOR NEW AND EXISTING
MUMS STARTING/RETURNING TO EXERCISE



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Introduction



Hi, I'm Alice

I specialise in Pre and Postnatal Fitness and Nutrition.

I have put together a mini E-book with a little bit of guidance to help you start your fitness journey/ return to exercise post baby, safely and effectively.

Starting back to exercise after having a baby can be daunting and a little confusing as to what you "can and can't" do. When you're feeling tired and your hormones are out in full force, exercising may seem like the last thing you want to do (don't worry, I've got your back). There are many benefits to keeping active post baby such as:

**Helps your
body to
recover**

**Boosts
mood**

**Can help
prevent
postnatal
depression**

**Improves
quality of
sleep**

**Boosts
confidence**

This Ebook is suitable for mums 7+ weeks postpartum providing there's no complications and clearance from a GP or health professional.

In this guide you will find information on working out with Diastasis Recti, how to get started, a basic nutrition guide and much more.

Getting started

When can I start exercise after having a baby?

Providing there were no complications at birth, you may feel up to starting gentle exercises such as core connection breath breathing, light walking (start off with a 5-10 min walk). Be sure not to rush jumping straight back into exercise as it can do more damage than good if your body is not ready for it yet.

For higher impact training it's important that you get clearance from your GP at your 6 week check up, providing you had a straight forward birth. For more complicated births and C-section delivery, your body may need a little more time to recover before diving back in. This is all totally fine and there are some lighter, gentle core rehabilitation exercises that you can start with.

Where to start

Seeking guidance from a fitness instructor that specialises in postnatal exercise is a good starting point. There are many postnatal classes you can join (some allow you to bring your baby) such as buggy fit classes, strength and conditioning classes, resistance training, yoga, pilates, rehabilitation classes etc. Classes are also a great way to meet new mums, share advice and build friendships. There are also lots of online options available enabling you to workout at home or at a gym with guidance and tutorials. This is also a fun way to get the children involved.

Walking and swimming are both effective and relaxing forms of exercise where you can go at your own pace and gradually build up endurance over time.

There are also many ways to include exercise into your day such as walking up the stairs instead of taking a lift, walking to the shop instead of driving, bending at the knees (keeping your back straight whilst lifting your baby out of the high chair, cot, pram etc.

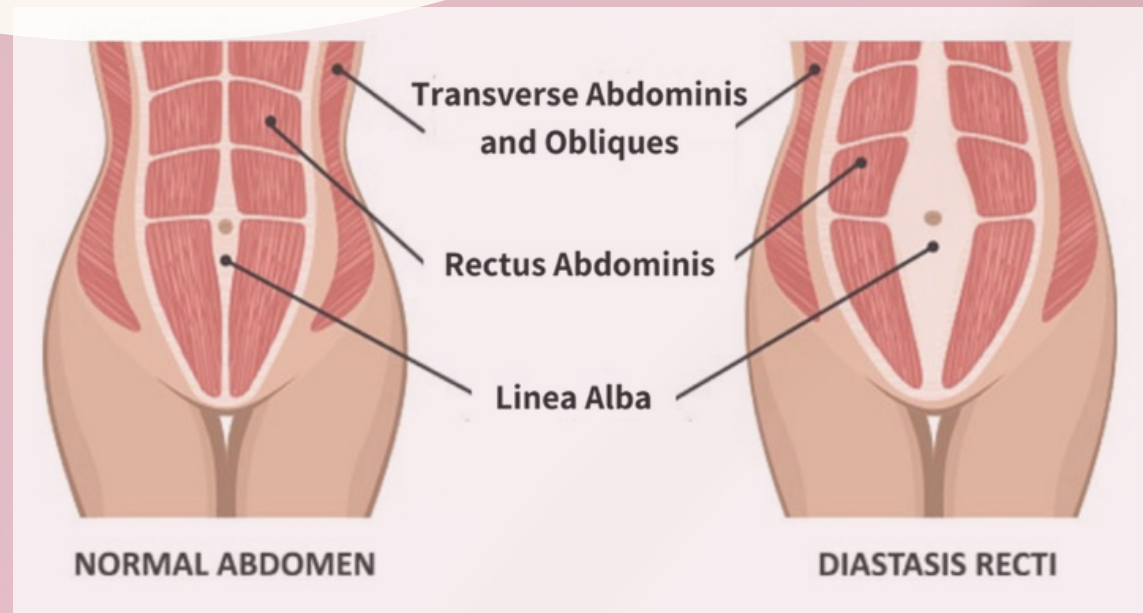
Exercising with

Diastasis Recti

If you are a new mum then you may have noticed some changes in your mid section such as: stretch marks, a little extra weight (compared to pre baby) and also some weakness in your abdominal wall. All of these changes are perfectly normal, you have grown a tiny human after all (give yourself a fist pump). I know when I had my little girl, I had never heard of Diastasis Recti and to be honest I'm not even sure if I ever had it. I feel like it's not something that's talked about enough, which is why I am here to educate you a little.

What is it?

Diastasis Recti is the natural separation of the linea alba, which is the tissue that connects the two sides of the abdominals. It can occur in anybody but is most common in post baby mums. During pregnancy (usually in the third trimester) the linea alba stretches and thins, separating the abdomen and leaving a gap of at least 2 finger-breadths apart.



When to seek medical advice

If you have a gap of more than 3 fingerbreadths wide and cannot feel tension in the midline then professional medical advice is advised.

What does it look like?

Diastasis Recti appears as a bulge or doming in the midline of the abdomen whilst performing core exercise. It can be located either above or below the belly button or through the midline. Whilst checking for Diastasis Recti you may feel some weakness and sinking in, in the linea alba (midline).

Exercises to avoid

If Diastasis Recti is present, vigorous and strenuous exercises should be avoided in early post pregnancy. This means any kind of exercise that causes too much strain on the core or doming. More advanced core exercises can be carried out after slowly progressing towards them, building back your core strength. Jumping straight into intense exercise such as HIIT classes can actually cause more damage. Make sure to seek help from a qualified professional before returning to exercise if you have any concerns.

Safe exercises

If minor Diastasis Recti is present (up to 3 fingerbreadths wide gap and tension still present), gentle core exercises can be carried out as a starting point building back strength in your core. Examples of safe exercises are:

- Heel slides
- Glute bridges
- Bird dog (with progression)
- Knee holds
- Elevated toe taps



Pelvic floor

Your pelvic floor is like a hammock cradling your uterus, bladder, bowel and other internal organs. It's made up of a group of muscles and ligaments which go across the base of your pelvis.

Pelvic floor muscle exercises and it's benefits

Practising pelvic floor exercises during pregnancy helps to support the weight of your growing baby and amniotic fluid, maintains bladder and bowel control, helps to rotate the baby's head into the correct position during labour and also helps to prevent piles and constipation. Continuing to do Pelvic floor exercises after having a baby can help to stop incontinence (urine and defecation) and can improve prolapse. Doing Kegels and practising diaphragmatic breathing helps to reconnect your core and Pelvic floor post pregnancy. Kegels and Diaphragmatic breathing can be performed earlier than the recommended 7+ weeks for exercise. They are very gentle on both the core and pelvic floor.

How to perform kegels

Your Pelvic floor is made up of slow and fast twitch fibres, it's important that you do exercises for both kinds. Slow twitch exercises involve holding the exercises for usually 5-10 seconds whereas fast twitch exercises include tightening and relaxing the muscles as fast as you can 4-6 times in a row ensuring you have a break between sets

Slow twitch exercise

Sitting comfortably with your knees slightly apart, pull up the muscles surrounding the inside of your bottom then pull up towards the front and hold for a count to four to start with. Make sure you breathe normally throughout. Relax and then repeat for around 4-6 reps. Over time, this exercise can progress to up to 10 seconds.

Fast twitch exercise

Seated or standing, try tightening and relaxing your pelvic floor muscles as quickly as possible, 4-6 times in a row.



Avoid skipping meals and fad diets and nourish your body with a well balanced diet to speed up recovery. Include protein, carbs, fibre, leafy green vegetables and fruit. Don't forget that losing weight post baby is a gradual process and may take a little longer than usual. Along with a well balanced diet, start with light exercise and gradually increase the time and intensity as your body starts to recover and you feel able to. Your body has been through a lot and needs time to heal and recover.

Keeping a food diary will give you a good idea of which foods you can remove/add to your diet to reach your goals.

Eating a healthy diet doesn't have to be boring and you most certainly do not need to cut out carbs. Carbohydrates are our main source of energy and after having a baby, you'll need all of the energy you can get.

Start off with baby steps adding in healthier foods and removing foods with a higher fat content. Often when we go "on a diet" we remove too much at once and just end up going back to our old ways. Making small changes is an easier and more effective way of making new habits and staying consistent.

Hydration

Be sure to stay well hydrated, the Eat well guide (NHS) suggests 6-8 glasses of water a day.