

health: wellbeing



SAFE RETURN TO EXERCISE

An exercise physiologist who is based in Sydney and the director of Pramfit, Mandi O'Sullivan-Jones now

has a new baby boy, Lorcan.

It is the epitome of many New Year's or post-natal exercise resolutions: 'I'm going to get back into shape!' But this resolution often either doesn't start up or doesn't continue for long. So what do you need to do to get back on track again?

To return safely and efficiently to an exercise routine, all people, regardless of their fitness history, should stick to a few common rules also known as the FITT (frequency, intensity, time and type) principle. The worst thing you can do is go too hard, too quick.

FREQUENCY refers to how many times you exercise per week and is one of the most important aspects to consider. If you haven't been exercising consistently in the past three months, it's best to start with no more than three sessions per week, with a break between

each. This way you'll start a routine you can build on. Include a cardio component in each session and resistance training such as weights or Pilates once a week. After a few weeks you can add an extra cardio session per fortnight until you can consistently achieve four to five sessions per week. Why this many? The National Heart Foundation Australia recommends 'at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on all or most days of the week' to maintain cardiovascular health.

INTENSITY refers to how hard we exercise. The Heart Foundation advises us to exercise at a moderate intensity, which means at a slightly breathless level with the ability to hold a conversation. If you're unsure, it's safer to go lighter at first. Allow your body to adjust to the additional toll before pushing yourself. It's best to increase your frequency before your intensity. Build good foundations within your body, so you avoid causing an injury that may end up being permanent.

TIME refers to how long you exercise for. With cardio, begin with 30 minutes in total.

You may need to do this in intervals, with a recovery in between, to stop your intensity getting too high at the beginning. It is not important to time resistance exercise, but ensure all parts of the body are exercised equally, especially opposing muscles such as the chest and back, and the biceps and triceps.

TYPE is the kind of exercise you choose. Choose an exercise that is applicable to the goals you wish to achieve and that's not too strenuous for a beginner or return exerciser. For example, if you haven't been a runner in the past you shouldn't try to run immediately after a difficult pregnancy or birth. You could aim for this goal once you have conditioned your body. Choose something you enjoy – if you don't you won't stick with it for long and will be back where you started.

If you're unsure whether you've chosen a safe and balanced program, seek guidance from a health and fitness professional. See the next issue for some ways to help stick with it and ramp it up!

Visit www.pramfit.com for class information.



REGAINING YOUR PRE-PREGNANCY SHAPE

Accredited practicing dietitian and mother-of-one Vanessa Schuldt has many years experience in nutrition and health.

Many women develop two obsessions once their baby has arrived: their bub's growth and their own girth. Count me in as one of them.

Wouldn't it be nice to see our weight drop in the reverse pattern of those baby growth charts? All of those celebrity yummy mummies make it look easy, even healthy. But reality is, sudden and dramatic weight loss after giving birth is unhealthy, mostly unsustainable and has the negative effect of reducing breast-milk supplies.

So what's considered safe weight loss and how can it be achieved? Firstly, give yourself a break in the first month or two as your body adjusts to your post-pregnancy state. Once ready to get back into shape, a safe amount of weight to lose is 0.5kg (and no more) a week. This approach will help keep the weight off long term. Try these tips:

• Set yourself one dietary goal each week. For example your goal might be to eat the recommended two pieces of fruit each day. Once

accomplished, continue with this eating behaviour and set one new goal each week, until a healthy eating pattern has been established.

• Enjoy a low-GI breakfast to help control your appetite and delay hunger. Low-GI foods include traditional porridge, muesli, low-fat milk, low-fat yoghurt, canned pears or peaches in natural juice, wholegrain toast and baked beans.

• Every morning, select two to three healthy snacks – foods to grab when a snack attack takes a hold. Try fresh fruit, fruit snack packs (in natural juice), wholegrain crackers or low-fat cereal bars.

• If eating chocolate or biscuits is your downfall, rather than going cold turkey, include one portion-controlled piece as a snack (for example, a 25g snack-size chocolate or one biscuit). Keep other tempting snacks out of reach and enjoy your indulgence leisurely.

• Base dinner around vegetables, aiming for 1.5 cups as a minimum. Include a protein food, such as 100g of lean meat or fish, as protein helps keep you feeling full for longer. Also incorporate a lower-GI food such as pasta, couscous, basmati rice or legumes to help keep cravings at bay overnight.