



Exercise and Nutrition Scientist Kathleen Alleaume is founder of The Right Balance.



Exercise and Nutrition Scientist Kathleen Alleaume has five post-pregnancy cardio and toning exercises to help you lose that baby weight.

exercise for NEW MUMS



Are you a new mum anxious to get back in shape after having a baby? You're not alone. But before you begin, it is important that you consult your doctor or midwife about the best time to start. This is especially true if you had a caesarean delivery. Generally, women who had a vaginal delivery can start mild exercises within a few weeks of giving birth.

1 Brisk walking **TARGETS:** cardio fitness, upper body

Regular walking is a great way to build up your cardiovascular fitness. Bring bub along – a stroller provides resistance to help tone your upper body. Start with 15–20

minutes of brisk walking. Increase the length of your walk gradually until you can walk briskly for 30–40 minutes. Feel free to split it up into shorter walks if that's more manageable.

2 Bridge **TARGETS:** abdominals, buttocks, legs, lower back

Regaining your core strength is vital post-birth. This is particularly important for mothers who had their abdominal muscles separate during pregnancy (known as 'diastasis recti').

Lie on your back with your knees bent and your back in a neutral position: not arched and not pressed into the floor. Take a deep breath in and raise your

hips off the floor until your hips, knees and shoulders are aligned. Squeeze your buttocks and tighten your abdominals. Exhale and return to the starting position. Repeat 10 times.

3 Pelvic tilts **TARGETS:** pelvis, abdominals, buttocks, front of legs

Since childbirth can weaken your pelvic muscles and cause problems, such as incontinence, this exercise is a great way to strengthen those muscles again.

Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Place your hands on your stomach so that you can feel the muscles tighten. Inhale while

you gently tighten your stomach muscles and push the arch of your back towards the floor. Squeeze your abs and buttocks and hold the position for 10 seconds. Exhale to release. Repeat 10 times, working your way up to 20 times as your stomach muscles gain strength.

4 Wall squats

TARGETS: legs and buttocks

Lean your back against a wall and walk your feet out in front of you, so you slide down the wall, until your knees are at a 90° angle to your body. Hold the position, keeping your abdominals contracted, for 20–60 seconds. To add intensity, hold light weights in your hands or squeeze a ball between your knees. Repeat three times.

5 Push ups

TARGETS: arms and chest

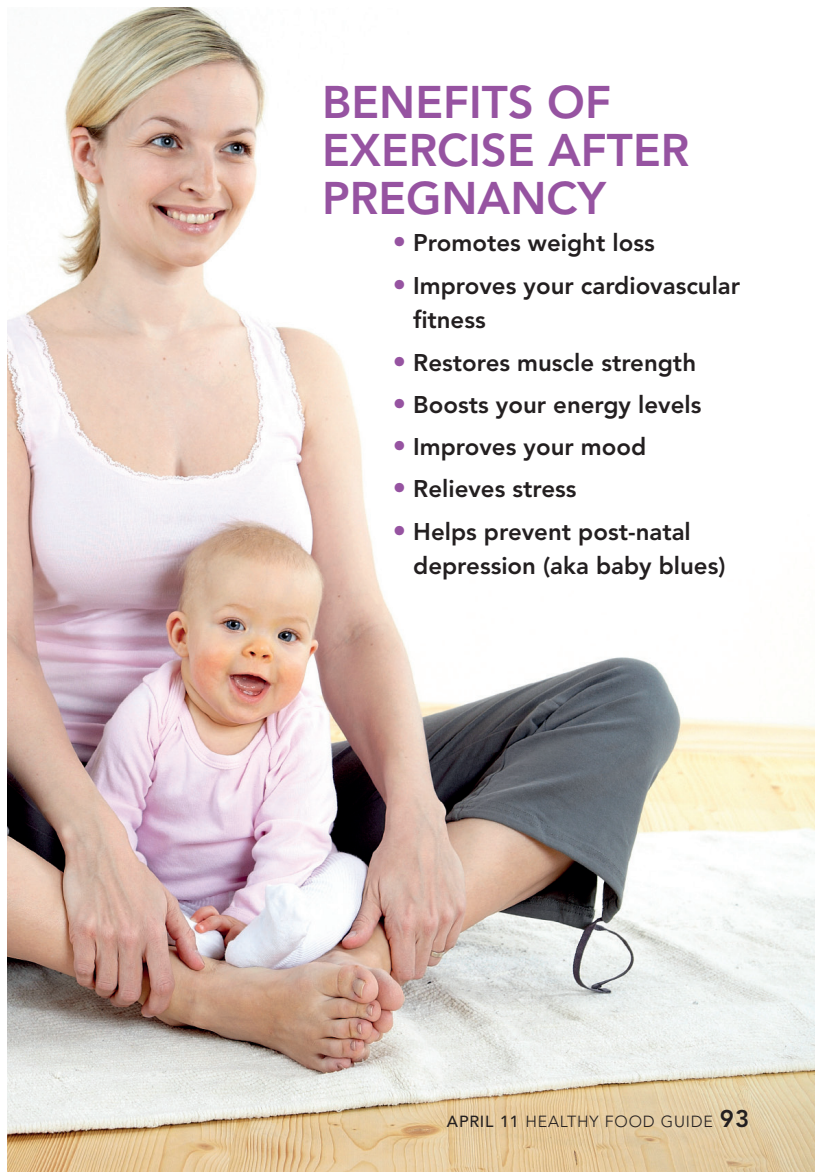
Babies get heavy pretty quickly, so now is a good time to build up your upper-body strength. Your baby will enjoy lying near your head and watching you go up and down.

Get into the all-fours position, knees bent with your toes tucked under. Place your hands slightly wider than the width of your shoulders. As you inhale, bend your arms, pushing your elbows out to the side, as you lower your chest. Remember to keep your bum and back all in one long line. You should feel the strain in your chest and in your arms. Exhale and push your body back up. Repeat 10 times. Start slowly and build up to three sets of 10. **hfg**

top tips

SAFETY FIRST: If you get back into exercise too soon and too hard, you can risk a permanent injury. Regardless of how easy or difficult your pregnancy, your joints and ligaments have been under enormous strain for several months and any rush to begin exercising can cause serious damage.

PLAN AHEAD: Giving birth is stressful for your body, so be sure to allow yourself time to heal after giving birth. Use that time to plan your workout schedule. While it may seem overwhelming at first, you'll start to notice a pattern in you and your baby's schedule, so you can set aside time to exercise.



BENEFITS OF EXERCISE AFTER PREGNANCY

- Promotes weight loss
- Improves your cardiovascular fitness
- Restores muscle strength
- Boosts your energy levels
- Improves your mood
- Relieves stress
- Helps prevent post-natal depression (aka baby blues)