

Lose the Pouch!

Strategies for Shedding Postnatal Pounds

While browsing a Hallmark store with my infant son, Nicholas, a 20-something clerk peeked into our stroller and asked me how old the baby was. "Six months," I said, beaming with pride over my first-born. "He's so cute," she added, and I nodded with absolute agreement. Then she dropped the bombshell. "Awwww, and I see you're pregnant again!"

I felt nauseous. But it was at that enlightened moment that I realized the pooch around my waist wasn't going to go away just by nursing or wishing upon a star. I was going to have to start exercising.

Even with a baby in tow, there is an abundance of exercise programs targeting postpartum poundage, whatever your pleasure or pocketbook.

Most postnatal moms want the same thing, says Laura Page, a certified trainer who runs Stroller Power, a stroller boot camp in Encino. "They all want to start losing the weight... and they want the fellowship of other women who are going through the same thing."

Page and partner Erin O'Bright (both are Valley Village moms who met while walking their babies) lead moms through jogging, lunges and free weight exercises along a nature preserve in Woodley Park.

Likewise, at Stroller Strides, a national licensing company with exercise groups in South Bay, Venice Beach, Brentwood and Santa Monica, trainers walk moms and babies through a full-body workout.



Redondo Beach mom Jill Levine, 38, says she couldn't motivate herself to exercise after her son, Laykin, was born. She found the Manhattan Beach Stroller Strides, and now exercises with other moms along the Strand.

"So many times I've joined gyms and yoga classes and paid for them, and it's just not my thing," says Levine. She gained 70 pounds during pregnancy. "I enjoy that I can be with other moms and their babies. I love being at the beach and being outside."

After two months with the group, Levine has dropped 15 pounds, attributing it to her trainer, J.J. Flizanes, who is more than willing to give advice on a nutritious diet.

"There are times when your baby is fussing and crying, and of course, the baby comes first," Levine says. "But J.J. will say, 'We're going to walk up this hill, do it at your own pace. Oh, and suck in your stomach.'"

Postpartum experts say it's important to get your blood circulating and use the muscles that were stretched during pregnancy. "You have a window of time where your body is recovering in many different ways... joint changes, cardiovascular changes, realigning your pelvic bone, re-strengthening your stomach and lower back," says Nancy Griffin, owner of the Mommy Care Mothering Center in West Los Angeles, which provides mom and baby postpartum exercise classes. "If you don't give those things a chance to recover fully and heal, it's more difficult in subsequent pregnancies."

Many local YMCAs and hospitals have classes for postpartum women, but if you're just too stressed to leave the house, consider popping in a video or DVD.

Melinda Bryan, owner/director of Pilates Studio of Los Angeles, recently made such a video, *Pilates After Pregnancy*.

"It's hard to take time for yourself," she says. "I'm a mother of three. I work. I run around with my head cut off like everyone else. Women like us need an

Pregnancy Pounds in Perspective

How much weight women gain during pregnancy varies greatly. The rate at which you shed those pounds after giving birth also varies quite a bit. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you strive to get back to your old self:

- Women lose approximately half of the weight they gain during pregnancy when they deliver their baby.
- Most of the remaining weight is retained fluid, which women

usually lose over the next few weeks through increased urination and perspiration.

- The rest of the weight is stored fat – calories for milk production. How you shed the final pounds depends on how much weight you gained during pregnancy and your postpartum nutrition and exercise program. Most women return to their normal weight before pregnancy within about nine months to a year after giving birth.