



8 EXERCISES with your BABY

Aquarius shows you how your newborn child can help you bust the baby weight.

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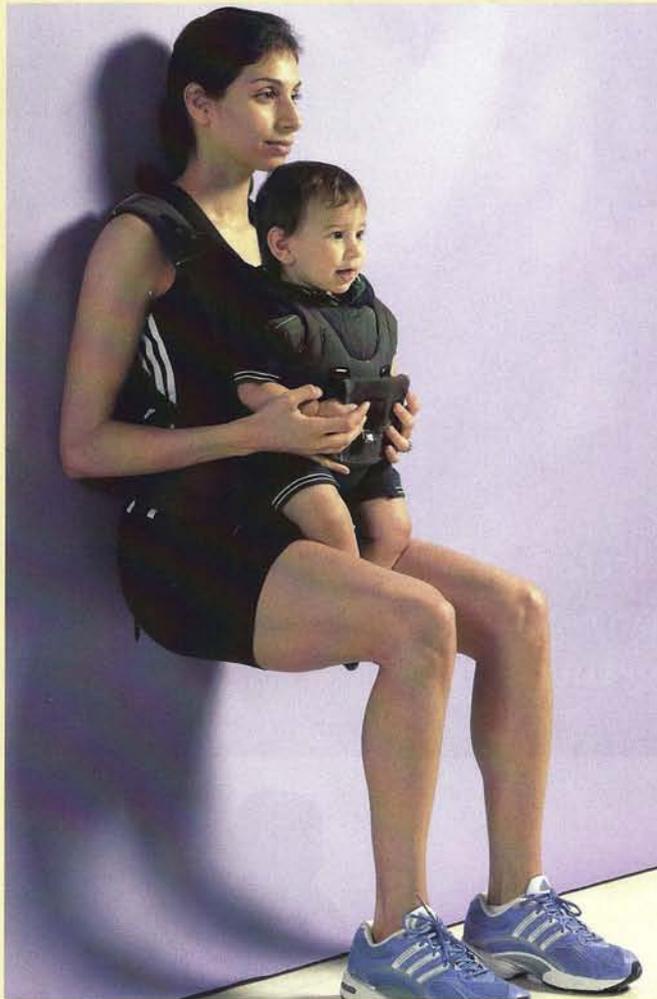
THE FIRST FEW WEEKS and months after giving birth are an intense time for new mums. The recovery process from labour and delivery, as well as the demands of a new baby present many challenges. Finding the time just to eat, shower and sleep is hard enough, making any personal time for exercise, a distant thought. And if you leave it too long, the weight gained during pregnancy becomes harder and harder to lose with time.

However, even if you can't get to the gym anymore, once medical clearance has been given to resume activities, you can take up a variety of exercises in your own home. And no, you don't have to invest in a lot of gym equipment or a nanny; you can do these exercises without leaving your baby's side – in fact, you are using your baby's weight to advantage. But remember, your baby has to be at least six weeks old and support the head where necessary.

This is an excellent way to interact with your baby and get back into shape. It's a full-body workout that targets all of the major muscle groups to help shed those unwanted pounds after birth. The routine is aimed to re-define and tone those stubborn areas of the body, such as the legs, thighs, hips, and stomach. Also, the strengthening exercises of the upper body will make daily tasks like picking up your baby from the crib almost effortless.

And as time goes by, your baby's growth and weight gain provides a natural progression in workout intensity. Aim to do three sets of eight to ten reps for each exercise, but start slowly and build up gradually according to your natural body rhythm. All you need is a baby pouch, a chair and an exercise mat to get started.

Bernadette with her 9-month old son Theodore



1 Baby squat against wall (Using baby pouch)

STEP 1: Stand with your back against the wall and feet about 45cm from the wall. Place your feet approximately shoulder-width apart, with your toes pointing forward.

STEP 2: While keeping your back straight against the wall, bend from the knees until thighs are parallel with the ground. Hold for 3 to 5 seconds, release, and return to standing position.

Expert tip: Your feet should be far enough from the wall so that the weight is placed on your heels as if you're going to sit in a chair. When holding the squat, make sure that your knees are above your heels and not over your toes; reposition if required by stepping further away from the wall.



2 Baby push-ups

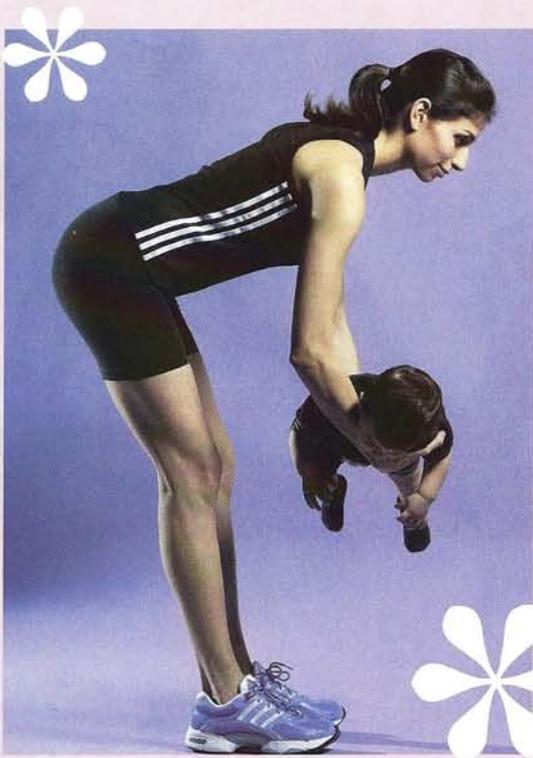
STEP 1: Get on all fours with knees slightly apart, feet elevated and ankles crossed. Position the baby face-up on the floor in between your arms. Place your hands beneath your shoulders and keep your body in a neutral position throughout the exercise.

STEP 2: Bend your elbows and lower your body towards your baby. Give baby a kiss and return to starting position.



POSTPARTUM EXERCISE POINTERS

- Drink lots of water (urine should be light coloured).
- Wear a supportive bra and footwear.
- Start slowly and increase gradually.
- Keep intensity level comfortable – don't overdo it.
- Stop exercising if there is pain or unusual discomfort.
- Don't hold your breath at any point; exhale as you exert force.

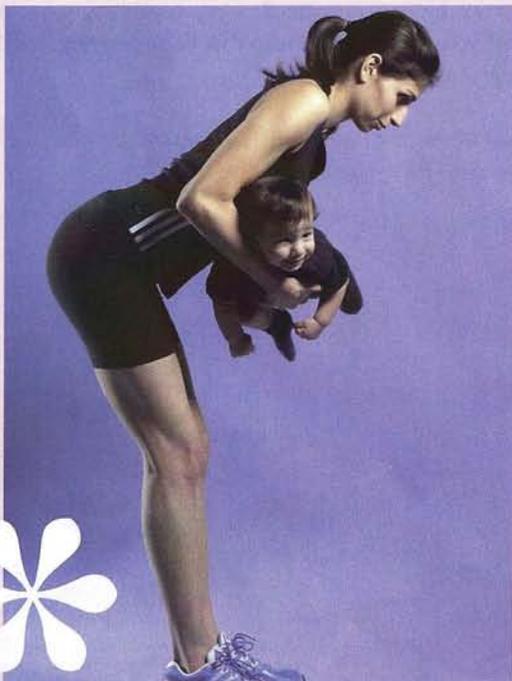


3 Bent-over baby row

STEP 1: Standing with your feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent, bend forward holding your baby parallel to the floor. Position yourself so that your back is slightly arched and parallel to the floor, and knees are bent. Use one hand to hold the baby on the chest and the other hand on the stomach.

STEP 2: While keeping your arms close to your body, slowly lift the baby up to your chest. Slowly lower to starting position.

Expert tip: Focus on squeezing the shoulder blades together as you bring the baby to your chest.



Bernadette and baby Theo prove that working out together is fun.



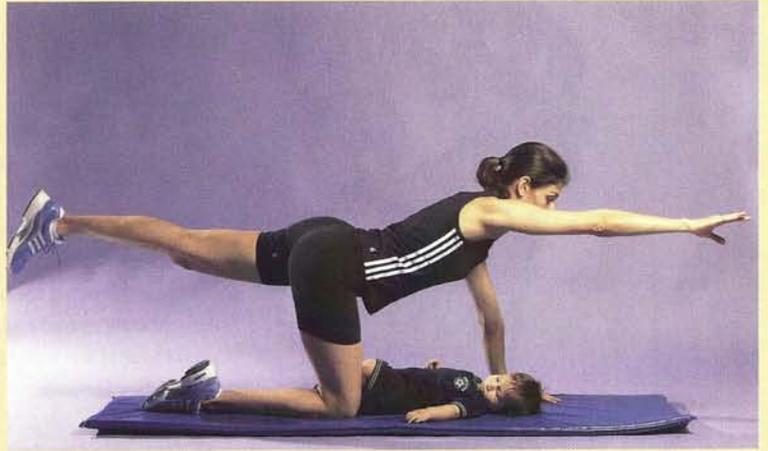
4 Baby crunch

STEP 1: Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Seat baby on your stomach and support his or her head and back against your thighs. Hold baby's hands for extra support.

STEP 2: Press your lower back against the ground as you raise your head and shoulders up toward the ceiling. Hold for 3 seconds, slowly lower and repeat.

Expert tip: Keep your chin away from your chest by imagining a tennis ball between your chin and chest.





5 Baby bird dog



STEP 1: Position yourself on all fours and place your baby face-up on the floor in between your arms. Keep your neck and spine alignment neutral; don't arch or round your back.

STEP 2: Extend one leg and the opposite arm so that they are parallel to the floor. Hold for 7 to 10 seconds, slowly lower, then repeat with the opposite leg and arm.

Expert tip: For beginners, lift your arm and leg separately instead of lifting both at the same time.

6 Seated baby calf raises (Using a chair)

STEP 1: Seated comfortably with knees at a 90° angle, hold your baby on your lap. Place your feet flat on the floor about shoulder-width apart.

STEP 2: Raise heels up, feel the tension in the calf muscles, hold momentarily, and slowly lower heels to the floor.

Expert tip: For greater range of motion, place feet on a step so that your heels pass the balls of your feet when lowered.



7 Baby lunge (Using baby pouch)

STEP 1: Begin in a lunge position, with knees slightly bent and feet shoulder-width apart for balance. Keep eyes straight ahead and shoulders back; avoid having the weight of the baby pull your shoulders forward.

STEP 2: Bend the knees and lower the body by placing most of the weight on the front thigh and heel until the back leg is just about parallel to the floor. Push straight up and return to starting position. Complete a set and then repeat with other leg.

Expert tip: Always make sure that your front knee is above the heel and not over the toe.

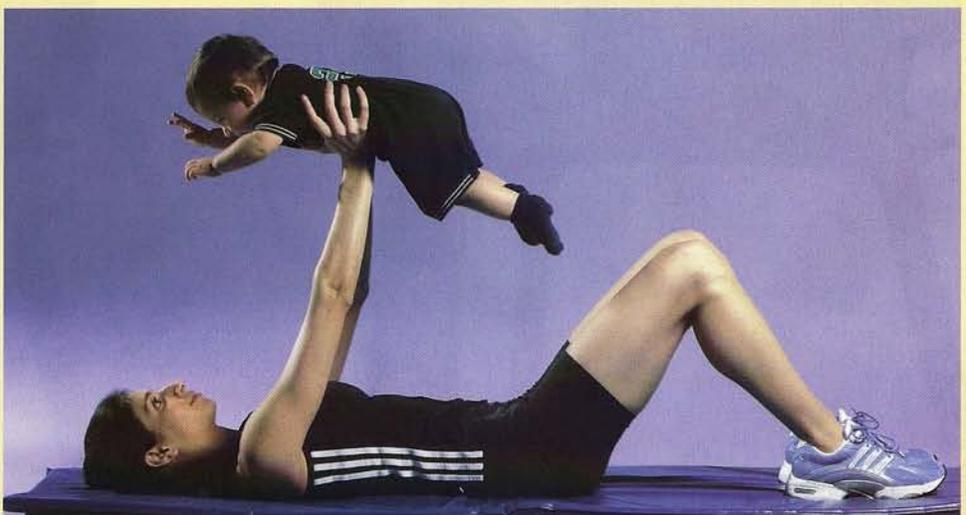
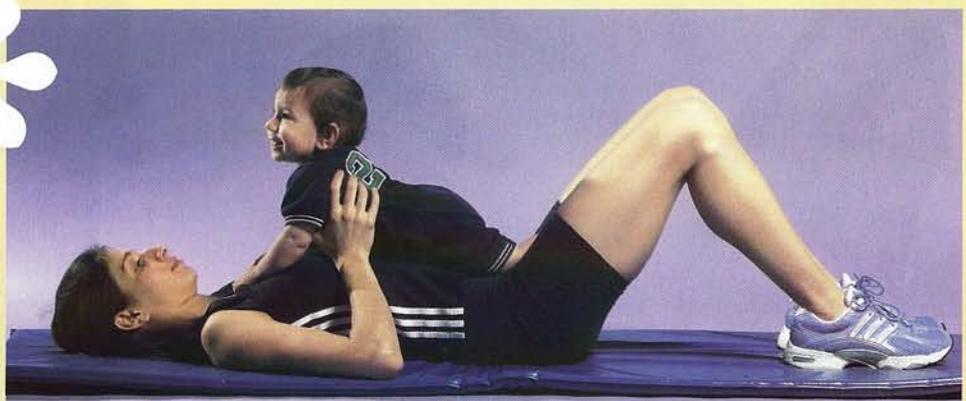


8 Baby chest press

STEP 1: Lie on your back with your knees bent. Hold your baby on your chest.

STEP 2: Push your baby straight up into the air without locking your elbows completely. Make funny faces as you lower baby back down to your chest.

Expert tip: Make sure your lower back does not arch as you push upward; imagine a ball pressing your belly button down towards the floor.



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