



# Mothers of New Babies and Toddlers - How Active should you be?



## Are you a Healthy Inactive woman?

If physical activity is NEW for you, or you have not successfully maintained a physical activity program or active lifestyle in the past, meet with a fitness professional to inspire you to stick with a FUN and SAFE physical activity program.

Track your progress during the first six weeks!

- Be physically active at least three times a week.
- Begin SLOWLY and increase your activity gradually.
- Make sure that the activity makes you feel good both during and afterwards.
- If you had an episiotomy (stitches), you will need to wait for them to heal before you begin physical activity.
- If you had a C-section you, will need to wait for your stitches and your abdomen to heal before you begin physical activity.
- Start slowly with abdominal exercises - if it hurts, you are not ready!
- There should be NO pain from the activity you choose.
- There should be NO heavy vaginal bleeding from the activity you choose.
- Your fluid intake must be high!
- You must get enough rest!

Stop any physical activity if you have any of these signs:

- Heavy Bleeding
- Pain
- Breast Infection or abscess

Decide what you want to achieve. You should be able to measure what you will do and how you will get to your goal. These are called measurable goals, and they might be something like this: "I will have an hour to myself every day to be physically active." or "I will walk 25 minutes every day during the next 3 weeks."

## Are you a Healthy Active woman?

If physical activities were a well-established part of your lifestyle during pregnancy, you can progress to your pre-pregnancy active lifestyle using the common sense guidelines provided above. You would be considered an active women if you regularly did something three times a week such as walking, dancing, jogging or swimming either during or before pregnancy.

## Are you a Recreational athlete?

If you are active every day of the week and maintained some of your individual or team sports while you were pregnant, you can also return to your active lifestyle using the common sense

guidelines we provide to new mothers. You may benefit from meeting with a fitness professional to help guide you through your first 6 months of training. The main rule is to avoid over-training. A professional can help you monitor your progress in a safe and careful way. This is essential!

## Are you a Competitive athlete?

If you are a competitive athlete trying to get back to the training schedule you once had, you should have a maximal aerobic capacity (oxygen consumption) test as soon as you feel ready to begin more intensive training. There are two reasons for this:

- to establish the heart rate zones for your different types of aerobic and anaerobic training, and
- to be sure that your aerobic capacity, anaerobic threshold, and your performance are improving.

You should probably repeat this test every 3 months during your first year after giving birth.

## Finding a qualified fitness professional

If you decide to seek advice about starting a personal physical activity program, look for a fitness professional who has a degree in one of the health sciences such as exercise science or human kinetics. Many hospitals, fitness clubs, community health centers, colleges, and universities hold special exercise classes for people with risk factors for heart disease. The fitness professionals working in these places are likely to be both well screened and well qualified to teach you. Try calling them to find fitness professionals in your area.

## Try Teamwork

Let the baby's father or other family members take care of the baby while you do some form of physical activity. Having time away from the baby (and house) can reduce the chance that you will feel overwhelmed. Those feelings of being overwhelmed can often be the first signs of postpartum depression. So, work as a team with the people around you.

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**Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) Tel: 613-562-5667**

For more information on CAAWS' Mothers in Motion project, please contact [caaws@caaws.ca](mailto:caaws@caaws.ca) or visit the website at [www.caaws.ca/mothersinmotion/e/](http://www.caaws.ca/mothersinmotion/e/).

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