

Lose Weight Safely After the Birth of Your Baby

Like many other new moms, you are eager to lose weight after the birth of your baby. Your body has stored extra fat and fluid. During the 3 to 4 weeks after birth, the body loses the extra fluids. However, it may take 6 to 12 months to safely lose all the weight you gained while pregnant.

Doctors tell moms to lose weight slowly. Most new moms need between 1500 and 2200 calories a day. Moms who are breastfeeding need 1800 to 2700 calories a day. To be safe, do not lose more than 1 to 1.5 pounds per week.



Eating less than the needed calories affects you and your baby. Food supplies the calories you need for energy to care for your newborn. Weight loss diets can make you feel tired. If you are breastfeeding, they can cause your milk supply to decrease.

Focus on healthy eating instead of weight loss. Eating a balanced diet will help you lose weight.

- Eat 5 to 6 small meals instead of 3 big meals a day.
- Do not skip meals. You are more likely to eat more food at the next meal.
- Eat foods high in fiber. This includes vegetables, fruits and whole grains.
- Snack on healthy low-fat foods. Say *no* to junk food.
- Eat lean meats, skinless chicken, fish and beans. They are healthy sources of protein.

- Drink or eat low-fat or fat-free dairy products.
- Drink 9 to 10 cups of water daily. Skip soda.

As soon as you are able, start an exercise program. Exercise helps weight loss. It may also improve your mood. Exercise has been known to improve the symptoms of post-partum depression.

Talk with your doctor before you start an exercise program. When you exercise:

- Start your program slowly. Take your baby for a walk in the stroller. Swim. Ride a stationary bike.
- Nurse your baby right before you exercise. Wear a supportive bra.
- Wear comfy clothes.
- Find a fun partner who motivates you.
- Drink fluids before, during and after your workout.
- Stop if you feel dizzy or sick.

Have a realistic get-back-into-shape plan. Pregnancy changes your body - sometimes for life. Focus on good health and energy to care for your family.

*Brought to you by Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital
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