

fitting in again

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Exercising with your baby makes it easier

So, you've made it through the first six weeks since your baby was born—waking, eating, and occasionally sleeping—all for the sake of your wee one. If you're like many, you've been living in your sweats, only daring to dream of those fabulous jeans that you used to love to wear.

Think you can't focus on fitness when your new baby commands all of your time and attention? Not true. In our modern world, there are options everywhere, even the option to attend exercise programs *with* your infant. A new breed of “mommy and me” fitness programs—from traditional aerobic and strength training to innovative yoga classes—are springing up all over the place, including in New Orleans and Mandeville.

Fitmom, a program founded by Kerrie Ann Frey and which has classes Uptown, at Lakeside Mall, on the Northshore, and on the Westbank, brings baby and mommy together for their fitness experience. Offering stroller classes, private fitness playgroups, and

in-home personal training, it aims to support new mothers with good fitness and the chance to socialize with women who have been where you are.

“Moms need—especially new moms—lots of support and if they can get it *and* scoot in a workout at the same time, then their whole day will be much easier,” says Kerrie about her mommy and me classes.

Rebecca O'Reilly, a trainer with Fitmom, says the [class] philosophy is “move it and lose it. The moms offer support and

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friendship to each other while spending quality time with their children.”

And the students are thrilled with the results. “I got down

to my pre-pregnancy weight in no time,” says Blaine Hill, a student of the Lakeside Mall classes. Blaine loves that the classes consist of so many different elements. “The class has a little bit of everything: aerobics, strength training, yoga, Pilates, and anything else the instructors can think up.”

If you’re interested in yoga, Wild Lotus offers a postnatal yoga class for mommies and babies six weeks to crawling age. (The studio is not set up for toddlers at this point). Incorporating singing, rhyming, postures just for baby, and postures for mom that use the baby as added weight, the classes aim to help new mothers rebuild their strength and flexibility after delivery.

“The classes also help new mothers cope with some of the stresses they may be experiencing—hormonal imbalances, sleep deprivation, and feelings of isolation compounded with the fact that they have a new baby to care for and love,” says Jennifer Teague.

“We hope that this class will provide a safe haven to bond with other new mothers and that babies will benefit by having calmer, peaceful mothers who take time to nurture themselves so that they can nurture their families.”

When questioned about the disruptions that babies can sometimes cause in the traditional quiet of a yoga class, Jennifer smiles. “The first rule of postnatal class is that babies can do whatever they want. Moms are encouraged to feed, nurse, walk around, change diapers... It’s okay if baby cries for the entire class. It might be your baby this week, but it will

be someone else’s next week. The mothers tend to find their own peace amongst the squeals, laughs, and cries.”

Of course, exercise following a pregnancy should be taken slowly, no matter how quickly you wish to get back into your favorite jeans. The American College of Obstetricians recommends resuming exercise gradually as soon as it is physically and medically safe and notes that returning to physical activity can help decrease postpartum depression.

Dr. Janet Ross, an Obstetrician with Touro Infirmary, says that women should wait approximately six weeks following vaginal birth or a c-section before beginning any exercise program, especially a program that involves the use of the abdominal muscles. However, moderate walking may be tolerated earlier. Nonetheless, all exercise should be approached carefully. Following birth, the body is still healing, so patience and caution are urged at the beginning of any exercise regimen. Listen to your body and never push yourself through any pain you might feel.

When you believe that you are ready and after consulting with your physician, consider joining a mommy and me class. Both mother and child could have a rewarding time together.

For more information on locations and times of Fitmom classes, go to www.fitmomusa.com or call 388-3849. For more information on postnatal yoga, go to www.wildlotusyoga.com (504) 899-9947.
