



Is it safe to start strength training after having a baby?

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GUEST BLOG

Having a baby can change your body a huge amount. Introducing strength training can help you rebuild strength and have huge benefits – as long as it's done right. Even if you had your baby years ago, it's worth considering adding in strength work to your weekly routine.

Betsan de Renesse, founder of [The Glow Method](#) and pre- and post-natal exercise specialist, has written this guest blog for Run Mummy Run about postpartum strength training.

Is strength training safe postpartum?

Yes, absolutely. In fact, I can't stop raving about the benefits of appropriate and progressive strength training for all mums and women. Regardless of how many weeks, months or years postpartum you are, progressive strength training with a core and pelvic floor focus has huge benefits.

Starting with new mums, if you think about it, strength training and being a new mum are actually relatively similar. Both require the body to adapt to increasingly physical demands, quickly. Your baby will triple his/her birth weight in the first year and strength training will not only prepare you physically for the reality of this, but the most recent research suggests that strength training could also help you prepare you for the mental demands of new motherhood. How amazing!

Strong body, strong mind

Many new mums adhere to the blanket advice of 'resting' post baby. Although I don't advocate jumping straight back into your old fitness routine, I get many emails from ladies who have been 'waiting' to feel better post birth and have found instead they feel worse. Sore back, knees and upper shoulders are high on the list of complaints. If you break through the

current messaging for pregnant and postnatal women, it makes sense. Resting, is high on the priority list. I was bombarded by people telling me to 'rest' during my pregnancy.

The problem with too much resting is that your muscles get weaker. Immediately post birth, if you were handed a 4kg kettlebell in the gym you may be a little surprised (or horrified!), but actually the average newborn weighs around 4kg and those little things don't like being put down! That's a real endurance session. Add to this that the lightest car seat on the market is 2.5kg (and most are significantly heavier), so before you even leave the hospital you're deadlifting and carrying at least 6.5kg for prolonged periods of time. If you start to get aches and pains as your postnatal body struggles to catch up and compensate, it's not really such a surprise once you've broken it down.

So can strength training really help with sore knees and a bad back? Yes, it's actually rehabilitative and healing. Not only does strength training help protect joints from injury, it improves balance and posture, and can alleviate aches and pain caused by muscle imbalances or weakness.

Breaking it down

During pregnancy and once the baby is born your posture changes. Ladies often lean back and tuck

their bottom under in an attempt to gain stability. Your body gets strong in this position, but it might come at the price of aches and pains. Getting rid of this pain requires getting strong in a more balanced way. Really good postnatal strength training programmes focus on your back and bum, as well as whole body. Getting strong through your back and bum can help correct muscle imbalance and support your core and pelvic floor. If you're stronger and more balanced, your weaker spots are under less pressure meaning you'll be more protected.

Strength training also increases stamina, meaning you'll feel fitter for exercise, but also for life. Being a mum is physically demanding and finding energy for play as your children get older can be challenging. Strength training can help with this. Not only improving your stamina, but also improving core and pelvic floor function. This will help you run and jump with energy, but also be pain and leak free.

Last, being a mums is one of the most challenging jobs we'll ever take on. The latest evidence suggests strength training can help build mental fortitude. What more could you want? Not only is strength training safe post-baby, it also helps to build a strong body and a strong mind. Pretty impressive stuff!

For more specific physio-led postnatal rehab and fitness programmes, including running-specific advice and workouts, go to www.theglowmethodathome.com. Use code GLOWTRY for one month free!