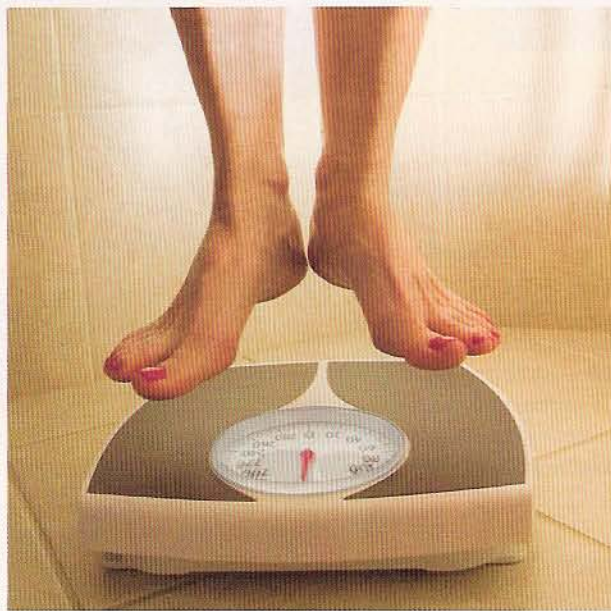


Bye-bye baby weight

Five ways to drop the postpartum pounds.

BY LISSA HARNISH POIROT



I was in shock—shock, I tell you—when I walked out of the hospital still looking pregnant. I figured once my 8-pound, 6-ounce baby had left my body, I would no longer look like I was smuggling a basketball in my belly. No such luck.

It doesn't help when celebrities emerge from the hospital looking as though they've never even been pregnant. (Angelina had twins! How is it fair that she is still skinnier than me?) But as much as you'd like to start dropping the baby weight from day one, the first 6 weeks postpartum are a time for healing and caring for your newborn, not for 2-hour aerobics classes and crash dieting. If you cut your caloric intake too drastically, your little one may not get enough nutrients, and you could also have trouble nursing. And doctors recommend a 6-week waiting period before resuming your pre-pregnancy exercise routine, so your body has ample time to heal from delivery. But in the meantime, here are five little tricks you can begin right away to jump-start your weight loss and work toward flattening that stomach.



1

Nurse

Breastfeeding can burn 200 to 500 calories per day and nursing moms swear that it's the reason they drop weight faster than non-nursing moms. While you're dropping excess weight, your baby is benefiting from the natural vitamins and minerals that only a mom can provide, building his immune system and lowering his risk of infections and allergies, as well as sharing special moments with you.

2

Stop eating for two

Nursing moms only need an additional 300 calories per day, and non-nursing moms don't need any extra, so if you're still eating for two, it's time to cut back. Don't do it drastically; instead, swap meals high in calories and fat for healthier options. Leave the cheese off your salad or sandwich, avoid chocolate chip cookies, and drink 1 percent milk instead of 2 percent. Little changes go a long way.

3

Add steps

Walking is low-impact aerobic activity and can easily burn off 300 to 400 calories per hour. Get more steps out of each day with adjustments like making a point to change your baby in his bedroom upstairs rather than the family room and parking your car in the space farthest from the store. Of course, a walk is great for baby, too. Get out of the house each day for a stroll around the block or your neighborhood park. She'll get fresh air, and you'll get moving.

Don't overdo it

While some moms are up for strolls around the block within a week of giving birth, others might not be ready to venture out for a little while longer. Your body will let you know what you're ready for, so listen to it. A good indicator is your lochia flow, the bloody discharge that follows childbirth. If it's tapered off but comes back full force and bright red following any physical exertion, you've overdone it. Take it easy until you're ready to get back in the game.

4

Get your groove on

Although you are taking it easy right now, slow dancing in the living room with your honey can be a great way to spend some one-on-one time together, while burning roughly 250 calories per hour. And swaying with babe in your arms can be a bonding experience. Bonus: The gentle rocking can help put her to sleep if she's cranky.

5

Become a clean freak

Movement burns calories, even if that movement is your arm "waxing on, waxing off" like the Karate Kid. Vacuuming the living room, mopping the kitchen floor, dusting the furniture, and even cooking can burn 100 to 300 calories per hour. A little exercise and a clean house at the same time? It's a win-win! **P&N**

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