

# GETTING BACK TO EXERCISE FOR BOTH OF OUR MOMMIES

By Terri Parsell Hilmey



## ERIKA

Erika has been exercising at Hive a few times, but has unfortunately had some difficulty coordinating the workouts with her new, much busier schedule (see below where our BlueCross/BlueShield of WNY health advisor, Courtney Moskal describes that as a common problem for new mothers). Erika also had a severe bout with mastitis, which is unfortunately also a rather common problem for new mothers who are breastfeeding. A milk duct becomes clogged, and milk begins to back up behind it, causing an extremely painful condition, along with an infection and a high fever. For new mommies who are breastfeeding, it's important to recognize a clogged milk duct right away, and either get into a hot shower, or apply a hot, wet towel, to get the milk duct open, and then massage it until all of the backed-up milk is out.

On the day I talked to Erika, she was feeling much better, and had actually scheduled two workout sessions at Hive for the following week. She foresees a more consistent return to the gym, now that her baby is sleeping through the night, and her schedule is falling into place. "Trying to coordinate working with the baby's feedings and naptimes, and working out is really difficult," says Erika. "But things are starting to take on a rhythm that should make things easier."

## LISA

Lisa has been back in the gym on a fairly regular basis, and she started back about five weeks after the birth of her baby. She feels great, and

says, "I believe that working out helped my strength before the baby was born." Lisa is still out on maternity leave, so it's fairly easy for her to fit in her visits to the gym. The challenge will be when she goes back to her "other" full-time job as a doctor. But she's determined to keep up with her workouts, "I will continue to make exercise a top priority," she says. She knows that it's going to be more difficult to find that window of opportunity to get out to Hive and exercise, but she's committed to it. And there's more good news on the home front, with Lisa's little baby on a very nice schedule and also sleeping through the night. As Lisa says, "Babies thrive best when their days are structured."

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## COURTNEY'S COUNSELING

Courtney Moskal, MS, RD, CDN, from BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York had some great advice for Erika and Lisa, as they manage their return to exercise, and losing the baby weight.

The Department of Health and Human Services recommends mom's receive a minimum of 150 minutes per week of moderate endurance physical activity. The guidelines for these women to follow are similar to those guidelines that people new to exercise receive prior to beginning an exercise regimen. These include, but aren't limited to:

- Take the time to conduct a warm up prior to exercise and cool down afterwards.
- Begin at a slow and comfortable pace. Stop immediately if you feel uncomfortable or faint.
- Drink fluids throughout the day and throughout your exercise.
- Wear supportive attire.

For mothers who are both breastfeeding and also involved in vigorous activity, think about breastfeeding your baby before the workout. Higher intensity activity can cause lactic acid to accumulate in the breast milk, which is sour-tasting and the baby might not enjoy. Feeding prior to exercise will help the mother to stay more comfortable and prevent the lactic acid build up in the milk. After about five months of breastfeeding, physical activity is less of an impact on the lactic acid as the body produces most of the milk solely at feeding time.

There are a few specific exercises that can help to strengthen the pelvis muscles after birth. The pelvic tilt focuses on the abdominal muscles while kegel exercises strengthens the pelvic floor muscles. Kegel also helps to support the uterus, bladder, small intestine, and rectum.

After having a baby, finding the time for exercise can be a barrier. Seeking the motivation from your partner and friends can be beneficial. Also, try to include your baby. You can bring your baby for a walk in the stroller or simply lying next to you on the floor while you conduct floor exercises. Once you do find the time to squeeze in thirty minutes of physical activity, the energy you gain through exercise will help for you to care for your little one.

Our mommies are experiencing the pull of daily life with a new baby, and the difficulty of fitting in workouts that comes with it. But, with their own steely determination to stay in good shape after baby, and Hive's own built-in customer service and flexibility, they're finding it a little bit easier than they expected. As their babies grow, they also each expect to find it even easier to fit things in.

We will be taking one month off but stay tuned for our December issue, when we do a retrospective of our belly shots, show photographs of how fit and healthy our lovely mommies are looking, along with more photos of their new bundles of joy.

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