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hey

baby

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**H**aving a baby is an enormous challenge, but getting back into shape needn't be. All you need is a little motivation and support and you'll be on your way to fabulous in no time. The other great news is there are loads of options for new mums. You can exercise with friends or on your own, at the park or in the lounge room. There are dozens of choices and they're all good.

So when you can, (and let's face it - it might be a while before you feel like working out), lace up those sneakers and get moving. Your body will love it, but more importantly, so will your mind.

"It's important to establish an exercise routine not only to get you back into shape but to give your body strength and flexibility," says Kimberley Garlick, director of Pilates Room on Sydney's Northern Beaches.

"Exercise will uplift you mentally and physically so you can keep up with your baby and stay on top of it all."

## in the gym

The gym is a great way to get motivated and try a variety of exercise. Gyms usually

offer classes such as Pilates, yoga and aerobics. Weights help to improve your strength and increase your metabolism and the cardiovascular equipment helps to burn excess fat.

"An all-round exercise session is a great way to get into shape," says Rachel Livingstone, director of Glowing Expectations at Ignite Health in Sydney's Surry Hills.

"It is really important for new mums to focus on core stability because there's lots of heavy lifting and your back needs to be protected. The core muscles in the belly switch off during pregnancy and they need to be switched back on to provide that protection," she says.

Glowing Expectations holds one-hour classes for up to six people, which include cardio work, weights and mat work for strengthening and stretching. A nanny is also provided.

David Allan, director of Fitness First, agrees the gym is a great venue to get your body back into shape. Most Fitness First centres have aqua classes which are gentle on a post-baby body and supportive and give great results.

"We have classes that are designed to target women's health and Fitness First

also employs trainers that specialise in training mothers," says Allan.

Glowing Expectations classes cost \$40. Call Rachel on 0402 903 732 or email [glowingexpectations@ignitehealth.com.au](mailto:glowingexpectations@ignitehealth.com.au). Fitness First centres provide a crèche for children aged from one week, costing from \$2 a visit, and they are open six days a week.

Visit [www.fitnessfirst.com.au](http://www.fitnessfirst.com.au) for more information.

## on the yoga mat

It is important to support the change in your hormone levels and your lifestyle. Ki yoga is especially good for this. Based on a Japanese healing art called shiatsu, it works on energy fields called meridians. Jack Marshall, director of Zen Renaissance Yoga School in Bondi Junction says: "Our post natal classes work on re-establishing women's rhythms such as their sleeping cycles, lactation and their own general nourishment.

You can bring your baby to these classes and they lay beside you while you develop your stomach strength and snap your body back into shape.

Ki yoga classes are held at Zen Renaissance Centre, Bondi Junction, call (02) 9369 1544 or visit [www.zenren.com.au](http://www.zenren.com.au).

## in the Pilates room

There is a strong emphasis on pelvic floor strengthening in Pilates, which will improve your muscle endurance, tone, flexibility, posture and help alleviate back discomfort.

With the growing popularity of Pilates, it's no wonder there are so many classes being snapped up by mums.

Kimberley Garlick at Pilates Room takes groups of mums walking before their Pilates session. "A great advantage of a group session is you get the support and advice of other mums," she says.

Getting a video is a good idea because it is unlikely you will make it to more than one class a week, and as Lynne Haplin at Fit Source says: "You can work out at home when the baby is asleep."

For information on classes at the Pilates Room visit [www.pilatesroom.com.au](http://www.pilatesroom.com.au) or email [info@pilatesroom.com.au](mailto:info@pilatesroom.com.au)

Pilates classes are also held at Fitness First with child minding facilities. For details visit [www.fitnessfirst.com.au](http://www.fitnessfirst.com.au)

The Pilates Trilogy videos are great for new mums and are available from Fit Source on 1300 557 110.

## the great outdoors

What better way to work on your body and mind than being in the fresh air?

Kimberley Garlick stresses the importance of what she calls "me-time". "Even though I hate the thought of getting up when I hear the alarm, having 30 to 40 minutes away from my family and getting out there clears my head and gives me the energy for a positive day," says Garlick.

If it's not possible to get away, Strollercize has established a great exercise routine. You meet at the park with your baby in your stroller and exercise with a group of mums. There's even a take-home pack which includes a CD ROM, instruction book and resistance band in case

you can only make it to one class a week. If you just want to take it easy you could always head down to Balmoral Beach on the north of Sydney or Neilson Park or Parsley Bay in Sydney's east. These areas have lots of grass, no waves, shallow water and are great family environments.

Strollercize classes are held in various locations in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Classes are for six to 12 participants and cost from \$14 per class. Visit [www.strollercize.com.au](http://www.strollercize.com.au) for more information.

## at home

The comfort of your home allows a variety of ways to exercise, especially if you take a quick trip to Rebel Sport. They have a large assortment of videos on Pilates, yoga and gym ball exercises. The videos cost from \$17 and gym balls from \$25. You can organise yourself a circuit with a skipping rope (\$15), dumb-bells (\$25) and resistance tubes (\$20). You might even want to add some boxing to your routine with bags starting from \$60 and gloves from \$30. Boxing is a fantastic way to burn fat, tone your muscles and de-stress. Why not attend a few classes or hire a trainer to show you how to set up your circuit. If you have a bit more cash to spend, stationary bikes start from \$400 and treadmills from \$1800, although you can easily pick these up for less in the Trading Post.

## keeping on

The biggest challenge is keeping the routine going. If you do you'll feel better afterwards and will come to enjoy working up a sweat. Aim to work out at least three times a week. This will really make a difference when it comes to gaining maximum results. If you can't get out to the park or the gym, buy or borrow a video or two and get some fitness equipment. That way you can keep up the routine at home.

And be realistic. Your body has just undergone an incredible transformation and it's going to be some time before you regain your former shape. After all, it took nine months for that weight to go on. It will most likely take just as long for it to come off. If you're overly focused on your shape stop for a moment and think about what you've achieved - you've brought a new person into the world. Surely that's worth the extra kilogram or two.