

## POST BABY WORKOUT – WHAT I WISH I KNEW THE FIRST TIME AROUND.

Okay, so here's something that may surprise you. I lost my baby weight without slogging it out on the treadmill. To tell the truth, I was too bloody exhausted for that. Let's face it, pregnancy and newborn life is a marathon! A year-long marathon where your body aches, you barely sleep and there's no one handing medals out at the end. They do give you a baby, though, at the three quarter mark, which is pretty awesome, and keeps you sprinting for a while longer. But, seriously, I could barely contemplate getting dressed in the morning, let alone building a strict exercise regime to get back to my pre-baby weight. What I did manage to do, though, was to make some sensible tweaks to my diet and lifestyle that made a big difference, not just to my waistline, but to my wellbeing, as well.



I've been training with Rawfit's Ricardo Riskalla for several years now (see our workout) – and he's a bit like my zen-master. Instead of giving me hardcore exercise plans, he'll send me the latest Harvard study about cortisol and its effects on weight loss. I combined his teachings with common sense and a decent dose of exhaustion, and I'll share them here, because I believe they'll help – not just new mums – but everyone who is concerned with their health.

### 1. WALK EVERYWHERE

In Lulu's first few months I did a fair bit of walking. She had reflux and the only way I could get her to sleep was to take the pram down to the bumpy boardwalk at Lavender Bay. "It's as simple as it sounds and very effective," agrees Ricardo. "Walking is a gentle way to reintroduce exercise for mums who are overtired. It's free and your baby gets to enjoy the ride, too."



WALKING KEEPS YOU ACTIVE, AND KEEPS BUB ASLEEP.



VITAMIN D WILL DO WONDERS FOR YOUR ENERGY LEVELS

### 2. GET OUTSIDE

As much as you feel like barricading yourself into the bedroom with the breastpump and a packet of Mint Slices, venturing out will also have an effect on your mood and sleeping patterns. I found that when I walked outside, it helped me get back to sleep during the night (rather than spiraling into think-mode in the middle of a night feed). "There are so many benefits to getting outside," says Ricardo. "It increases your exposure to sunlight and by default it will help you to boost your vitamin D levels, levelling out your circadian rhythms and strengthening your immune system." And yes, some of these photos were shot in a gym, but to be honest, I never go to the gym. I had planned to shoot these pics outdoors, but it was raining. Luckily the friendly team at Speedo Gym in Bondi welcomed us in! I usually train in a beautiful park by the harbour. Sometimes I even train barefoot. Nature is very comforting, and sometimes it's just what the soul needs.

### 3. TWEAK YOUR DIET

Once I had stopped breastfeeding, I made a few adjustments to my diet – minimizing sugar (save for the odd bit of dark chocolate), dairy and processed flours. I switched out rice with quinoa and pasta with zucchini, kelp or konjac noodles. I struggled with bread as I really, really love toast in the morning, but now I try to just have some good quality sourdough a couple of times a week instead of every day. The main thing was upping my veggie intake dramatically. If I wasn't craving meat, I would opt for a veg-laden stirfry, soup or curry. Ricardo was also always reminding me of the importance of not overeating at any stage of my pregnancy. "Don't use pregnancy as an excuse to indulge in unhealthy foods," he would say, (plying the tub of Sara Lee from my clutches). "Instead aim for a super diet full of nutrients, rich in vegetables and lean proteins. Good fats are also important."



MY GO-TO RECIPE BOOK FOR FRESH, EASY AND HEALTHY MEALS, DONNA HAY'S FRESH + LIGHT POWER FOODS



BE GENTLE ON YOUR JOINTS WITH PLENTY OF SWIM TIME

### 5. FOCUS ON STRENGTHENING

As I said, apart from swimming and walking, I really didn't do much cardio. I did, however, try to do the odd bit of strengthening. In my sessions in the park with Ricardo, which I resumed when Lulu was 8 weeks old, we would do very gentle firming and toning exercises, like leg raises, TRX bands and push ups. At home, if I felt like it, I would do some gentle yoga, focusing on balancing poses and the warrior sequence, which I find is dynamite for quads, glutes and stretching the back out. I also love putting on Emma Siebold's Barre Body DVD's – I've used them for years and I often incorporate her exercises into my stretch and yoga sequence.

### 4. SWIM AS MUCH AS YOU CAN

During pregnancy I really got into swimming. I loved that it was a low impact exercise that supported my body beautifully, gave me a bit of cardio exercise and some blessed relief in my joints when gravity being taken away. I've recently gone back to it and it's been such a relief. One trick I learned was to listen to music with an underwater iPod - I bought a waterproofed iPod Shuffle (they inject it with a gel to stop the water from getting in) and would power up and down the beach to the beat of old school hip hop and dance. The pool is fine, but swimming in the ocean feels incredible. The salt on your skin, the sun light filtering through the sea water, catching site of a school of fish... it's magic. We're so lucky in Australia.



THE PRAM MAKES AN EXCELLENT BALANCE BAR...

### 6. CUT THE COFFEE

I know! Most people will scoff here, and when you're not getting sleep you tend to think a caffeine IV is helping you, but I felt SO much better after cutting out my daily latte. Minimising that regular intake of milk made a big difference to my system, not only did I feel less congested and bloated, I felt less stressed from the caffeine. I occasionally have a weak almond latte for fun, but most days I stick to tea. I bought a milk frother from Aldi which froths almond milk beautifully and I now make turmeric and chai lattes every morning so I don't feel like I'm missing out when all the girls come in with their takeaway coffee cups.



ALDI EXPRESSI MILK FROTHER MADE THE SWITCH FROM COFFEE TO ALMOND CHAI EASY

### 7. SLEEP AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

This must be everyone's favourite. But really, scientists are proving that lack of sleep and stress have a greater effect on weight gain than we realise. So rather than waking up early to go for a run, I would squeeze every extra minute out of my sleep-in. If that meant giving Max the iPad if he woke really early in the morning, then so be it. Those first few months are tough, so you have to go easy on yourself. "New mums sometimes put too much attention in to exercise and excess exercise and lack of sleep can stress the body and that causes the body to produce the stress hormone cortisol – which, in turn, increases appetite and holds onto fat. I highly recommend my clients to sleep when the baby is sleeping. Every minute counts." Amen to that, Ricardo.

Zzzzzzz.



DOES RESTING ON A WALL COUNT?

Story by Sigourney. Photography by Titus Pengelly. Sigourney wears The Upside, Nimble Activewear, Vie Active and Vvayama.