



SHEDDING POST PREGNANCY WEIGHT

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Your life has just done a 180 degree turn around with your new bundle of joy, but with all the inevitable sleepless nights your well-being is surely taking a back seat. Although there is a lot going on as a new mom it is important that one takes time to look after yourself and looking at your weight gained during pregnancy and how to effectively manage it, is one of them.

Weight loss post pregnancy is important as it may reduce your complications for the next possible pregnancy; it has also been seen to help maintain a healthy weight for a longer period of time down the line, thus helping to reduce your risk for lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, strokes and heart disease. Many women start off their pregnancy already overweight or obese which makes losing the weight even more important. In 2009 a study showed that 45% of women began pregnancy overweight or obese which had increased from 24% in 1983.

When to start thinking about losing those extra kilos?

This is dependent on what your weight was before pregnancy. A mom's goal should be by six months after delivery to return to your pre-pregnancy weight if you were of a 'normal' weight prior (according to the Body Mass Index criteria). If you were more overweight pre-pregnancy then it will take longer. However, don't try losing it too quickly after you have given birth as it may take you longer to recover from childbirth. Relax until your 6 or 8 week check-up or until your baby is 2 months old if you are breastfeeding before trying to shed the kilos.

How much to aim for?

Be realistic as your body has been through a big change going through pregnancy and it may not return to exactly how it used to be before. A goal of about 0.5kg and 1kg a week weight loss shouldn't affect the supply or quality of your milk.

How do moms begin to lose weight?

One of the ways to start is to monitor your diet and reducing the amount of calories you eat on a daily basis from what you previously ate. Don't go below your minimum requirements as this will have negative effects. The average is to not go below 1800 kcal/day.

Breastfeeding is one of the best and easiest solutions. A big benefit is that breastfeeding naturally burns calories without you changing your diet or exercise routine. As a breastfeeding mom, you do not need to increase your intake due to perceived increased needs as most moms would have adequate fat stores from the pregnancy that the body



will use to get energy for producing the milk. Losing weight too quickly however, will cause you to produce less milk which one should be cautious of.

Eat healthily

- Eat small frequent meals aiming for 5-6 a day. Grazing more prevents us from overeating when we are very hungry and controls unhealthy snacking. Healthy snacks such as FUTURELIFE® HIGH PROTEIN SmartBars are great low GI options, a handful of nuts, low-fat yoghurt or lean biltong.
- Try eating more fruit and vegetables as they are high in fibre, vitamins and other nutrients. They will boost your immune system and provide many nutrients to your baby for good development. Try snacks like cut apple with peanut butter, a banana smoothie or carrots dipped in hummus. See FUTURELIFE®'s website for delicious smoothie recipes.
- Start your day with breakfast to kick start your metabolism and get it burning calories as soon as possible. If you feel hungry sooner during the day then that's a good thing, your metabolism is working. FUTURELIFE® Smart food™, FUTURELIFE® HIGH PROTEIN Smart food™, and FUTURELIFE® ZERO Smart food™ are great options for a meal, shake or smoothie in the morning.
- Eat meals slowly to give your body time to feel full and thus reducing the chances of overeating.
- Avoid skipping meals even although you are now a very busy sleep deprived mom. It slows your metabolism down which won't help you burn calories.
- Keep up your dairy intake especially if you are breastfeeding to make sure you have enough calcium intake that your body doesn't have to take some from your bones.
- Remember if you are breastfeeding that what you eat will influence what your milk contains and what it tastes like.
- Eat foods that are high in DHA which is an essential omega-3 fatty acid that helps your newborn develop a healthy nervous system and brain. Salmon, tuna and sardines are good sources.
- Remember to drink 6-8 glasses of water a day to keep hydrated and help milk production. Monitor the colour of your urine to see your hydration status. Avoid drinks such as fizzy drinks, and fruit juices that are high in sugar. Dilute fruit juices with water instead.
- Keep to changes for a healthier lifestyle than going for drastic fasts, detoxes and diets that restrict certain nutrients or overall intake too harshly. Pregnancy and childbirth has taken its toll on your body so look after it and make changes that are sustainable. Don't have the same expectation as most celebrities. They often don't lose weight in a healthy manner.



Exercise

A combination of healthy eating and getting your body moving will help you lose weight easier. It will also help as a stress reliever and boost your mood to prevent those baby blues setting in. Start slow and try walk for about 20 minutes. Exercise that is more sustained over a longer period will help the most compared to a short intense exercise. Even a good session of household chores or walking around the block with your baby in a pram will help you get more active. Ask around in your neighbourhood as there are often classes that are held for moms and babies that also include some activity. Check with the doctor if this is alright especially if you had a C-section.

CONCLUSION

Becoming a mom is a very unique and special moment in a mother's life, and although it may not be the top of your priority list at the moment you should try incorporating some of the tips mentioned to help you lose that post-pregnancy weight. It is a very challenging space to be in so also ask for help. Talk to your family and friends for support in trying to have a healthy lifestyle. Speak to your doctor or dietician about exact diet plans and ways to help you stick to your new habits.

WHERE DOES FUTURELIFE® FIT IN?

The FUTURELIFE® range has great options to try when trying to lose that post-pregnancy weight – having a meal, snack or smoothie easily and conveniently available us to avoid the excuses about time. Look out for the LOW GI label to ensure you have sustained energy and are kept fuller for longer.

REFERENCES

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