

Bouncing Back to Health

A Lesson on Nutrition & Fitness After Pregnancy

Playgroup #23

Materials Needed

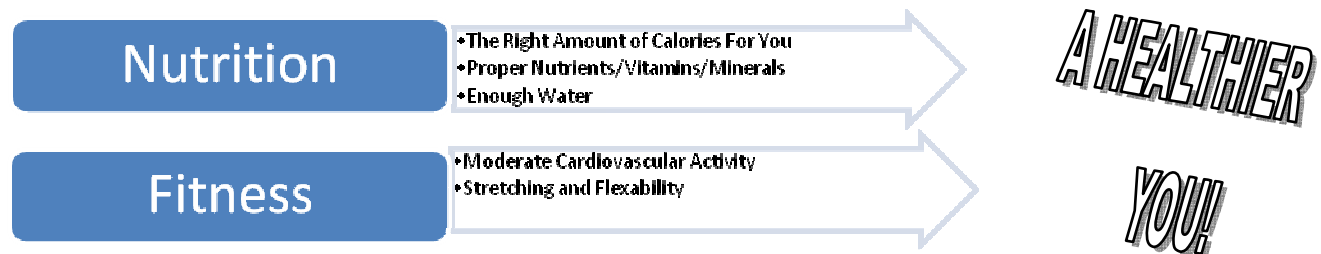
- Loose clothing to allow fully body movement

Handouts

- Babies & Mom Workout Ideas
- Food Guide Pyramid

Introduction

So now you have a new little one in your family and most of your time, energy, and efforts are probably being put into feeding, changing diapers, cleaning, chores, feeding some more and even more changing diapers. These are all extremely important things, and your new baby needs all of the time, love and attention you have to offer. But it's also very important that you take some time for yourself, and making sure that you are eating healthy, nutritious foods, and getting in some moderate exercise will not only benefit your body but also your babies. Here is some important information about nutrition and fitness and some great tips and pointers in making sure you are as healthy as can be:



Lesson Plan

Lesson Objectives

- Understand the importance & benefits of good Nutrition
- Learn the basics of good nutrition
- Understand the importance & benefits of fitness after pregnancy
- Learn some simple easy solutions for you to implement

Nutrition:

Why Nutrition is Important:

There is truth to “You are what you eat” and when we give our bodies the proper nutrients that it needs to function properly and maintain a healthy weight, we are allowing ourselves to be at our optimum performance level, remain healthy, ward off illness, decrease cardiovascular health problems, cancer, and in the case of breastfeeding--gives your newborn the proper nutrition needed for growth.

The Basics:

Calories- Know the amount of calories your body needs daily. If you are breastfeeding, your body needs about 500 more a day than if you were not. If you are not sure how many you should be consuming, visit Mypyramid.gov (you can calculate exactly how many you should be eating, and there is also a selection for breastfeeding moms). However, it is important to note that the quality and nutritional value of the food is better than the empty calories of the extra 500; choose more protein, fruits, and whole grains to add.



Photo courtesy of www.mypyramid.gov

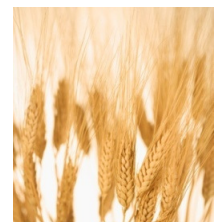
Fruits & Veggies- Make sure you are getting enough fruits & vegetables daily. Both are so beneficial to your health and pack a lot of “bang-for-your-buck”. Fruits and Veggies are both low in calories and fat, and provide natural vitamins, and minerals. They contain cancer-fighting properties and can aid in maintaining a healthy immune system. They also have filling-fiber and help keep you fuller longer.



Water- This small aspect of health and well-being is probably not emphasized enough in regards to health. Making sure your body is properly hydrated is very important because water is necessary for almost every function in the body and is essential to life. Water helps flush out waste and toxins, gives you a “full” feeling in between meals, and helps ward off many other health problems. Breast feeding mothers especially need to increase their fluid intake to aid in the production and maintenance of milk. The recommendation is about 8 cups/day if not breastfeeding, and 10-12 cups/day if breastfeeding.



Whole Grains- New research is finding that whole grains offer high levels of antioxidants along with vitamins and minerals. It is recommended that women over the age of 19 consume 3 servings daily. These can range from brown rice, whole grain bread/bagel, popcorn, Bulgur pilaf, whole grain pancakes, cereals, and oatmeal (ADA). Including whole grains into the diet, and choosing whole grain products over “white” products (white rice and bread) is much more beneficial to your health



Calcium- This is one of the most important nutrients to women. Calcium aids in building strong bones and in decreasing osteoporosis later in life. Women need about 1,000 milligrams a day, and nursing mothers need about 1,200. It is also important to consume your calcium with Vitamin D, which helps with the absorption. Some good options are reduced fat milk, yogurt, cheese, fortified orange juice, fortified cereals or snack bars. To meet this high quota however, a supplement may be necessary, and in that case just choose one that also contains Vitamin D. Try to space out your calcium intake throughout the day for better absorption (ADA).



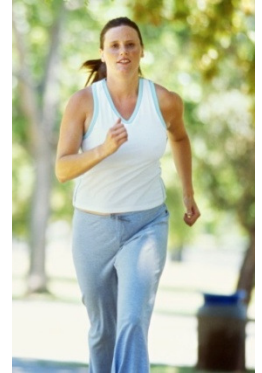
Multivitamin- Usually women are not getting the right amount of vitamins and minerals from their diet. Especially Breastfeeding women, need to make sure they are getting those vital nutrients for themselves and for their baby. Folic acid and zinc are among those that need to be made sure are getting into the diet. Taking a multivitamin or prenatal vitamins post pregnancy is a great idea to ensure that you are getting what your body needs.



Fitness:

Why do we need exercise?

Although it may not be the most exciting or desired activity, exercise offers some of the greatest and lifelong benefits to our health and bodies. When exercise is incorporated into everyday living the rewards of doing so are endless. Exercise can help shed pounds, increases endurance and stamina for everyday activities, releases those “feel-good” endorphins, lowers cholesterol, blood pressure, and decreases your chances of getting diabetes, heart disease, and so much more. So why don’t more people do it then? Well, there are many reasons however, as a new mom who recently had a baby, moderate exercise and activity could be very beneficial to you and your baby.



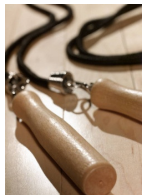
What to do:

There are many ways to incorporate exercise and activity into our daily lives. There are many fun things that you can do throughout the day that will all add up in the end.

Stroller walking/running- If you have a sturdy stroller, taking your baby out on a walk, or jog may be fun for the both of you. Not only will your baby get to go outside and “see the world” but you will be able to get in your exercise for the day. This is a great option for mothers that are home with their baby during the day, and still want to get out and get some activity.



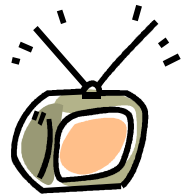
Water aerobics- This is a great, low impact activity for moms who don’t like the impact and jolt of running or speed walking. Water aerobics offer great cardiovascular benefits and will really get your heart pumping, all while having fun in the water. You can even involve your new baby in the water with you, as you both move around and enjoy the exercise (just make sure you have the appropriate baby seat or floating carrier for your baby- safety first!)



Jump rope- This activity can be done anywhere, including in your home, or backyard while the baby is down for a nap. Jumping rope is a great aerobic workout and will raise your heart rate and stamina. Try doing 1-2 minutes of straight jumping, until you can build up to a bit more. Then rest for a minute or two, and repeat.

Bicycling- A great overall body workout, bicycling can be done stationary or outside. If you have a stationary bike in your house it sure makes exercising more convenient, but if you don't, bike "traditionally" and enjoy the great outdoors. You can even go out with the whole family with the proper carrier and bike.

Workout Videos- This is a great way to exercise without ever leaving your house. There are a wide variety of workout videos to choose from. Pilates and yoga focus on core strength, toning, and flexibility. Be sure to include one that offers an aerobic routine but that is not so difficult you find you can hardly complete it. Garage sales are great places to find really cheap videos, but you can also pick them up for a reasonable price at most stores that sell videos.



Little Things- Parking farther away from the store and walking an extra 2 minutes, or taking the stairs instead of the elevator are great ways to increase activity throughout the day. Any extra step or two that you can get will really add up in the end. If you have a spare minute, do a few crunches, or a few pushups. Not only will you slowly be looking better by doing so, you will feel physically better about yourself.

Do what you can, when you can do it

Don't beat yourself up if you can't get in a work out or if you didn't eat the healthiest foods one day. You are busier and more tired than you probably have ever been, and your new baby is of course your number one priority. Try to get in activity when you can, and don't get upset if you can't. Try to eat the healthiest and best you can as often as you can. Listen to your body and never do anything that hurts strains or doesn't feel right. Just making little healthy changes to your everyday life will be extremely beneficial.



Activity

Gather around with your babies in arms and try out some of the exercises from the Babies & Mom Workout Ideas handout. These are great ideas because they can be done anytime during the day. Feel free to implement the various exercises throughout your day or schedule a set time. Both with help stretch and tone your body and get to back in to shape!

References

United States Department of Agriculture, <http://mypyramid.gov/>

American Dietetic Association, www.eatright.org

Brown, Sylvia (2003, November 15). Women's Health. Retrieved October 16, 2008, from About.com Web site: <http://womenshealth.about.com/cs/breastfeeding/a/nursingdiet.htm> (2008).