

Q: How does one find the time to exercise with working full-time and having a very busy 2 year old (who you want to be with when you aren't working)? Michelle

A: Most new parents can relate to your feelings of frustration when it comes to spending time with baby and making time for regular fitness. You are not alone! Maintaining a 'regular', albeit flexible, fitness routine is not only important for your physical health but also your mental health during the first few years of parenthood.

Always speak with your physician to obtain medical clearance before increasing your physical activity level. This is especially important in the months following the arrival of your new baby.

Here are some ideas that I have seen work for my clients, friends and family:

- 'Baby Bootcamp'! If you can carry your child in a back pack or snugly you have your very own baby-gym! Try the following exercises at home or at a local park with baby in tow: Squats, lunges, calf raises, step ups, incline wall or railing push ups, stair climbing.
- Abdominal exercises such as crunches and core stabilizations are challenging and fun with baby playing along. Just place your little one in a supported position against bent knees or on your chest for tummy time while you crunch away!
- Running or power walking with your child in a stroller increases leg strength and benefits your heart and lungs. Ensure smaller babies have appropriate head and neck support for stroller fitness.
- Hit the trails! Take your child for a hike in a sturdy stroller or a baby-backpack on technical trails. In the winter try snowshoeing for a beautiful escape into the snowy hills. Adding your baby's weight will push your leg strength to a new level.
- Adaptive carriers for your bike allow you to go further and continue exploring at a good pace once your child is too big to pack along. Some of these also adapt for cross-country skiing.
- Invest in a piece of home cardio equipment. A stationary bike, an indoor trainer for your road bike or a treadmill are all very convenient options for getting that workout in without leaving your child. If you don't have your own equipment you can take turns with a friend who does. One parent goes outside for a workout and one stays inside for a workout 'with the kids'.
- A very inexpensive options are workout DVD's that you can rent from the library or exchange through friends. These are a great way to stay home and get in a fast effective workout. There are so many to choose from and they can be a great motivator during slumps in your routine.

I hope these ideas help you with your goals to stay motivated and spend time with your child!

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