

Suddenly life is crazy. There are toys everywhere, babies are demanding attention, your partner is throwing a temper tantrum and it feels like you haven't slept in years. And yet, crazily, you love it and are probably thinking about having a baby yet again (if you're not already pregnant...). Families are wonderful but we want to make sure you make a bit of space for yourself. So we've put together some quick and simple tips to make sure your voice doesn't get lost in the hubbub of family life.

## FINDING YOUR "ME" SPOT

### **Mental calm and balance**

It's great being a mum, but it's also easy to lose your identity as you end up constantly looking after everyone else. The majority of mums feel under pressure to "get it right" and feel too guilty to take rest. However, it's really important that you give yourself a break. You should make sure that you plan to have a little time away from the family. You're working really hard bringing up a family so you deserve a reward. This could be something as simple as taking a long bath, or getting a manicure and pedicure. Just make sure you have a moment to yourself.

If you're finding it hard to get even a small break perhaps you need help with time management. Write a list of things that you need to achieve every day and prioritise tasks: it can give you a real sense of achievement to tick items off your list. By timetabling your tasks rather than trying to do everything at once, you'll find you can get things done and still find time for yourself.

### **Top tip**

*Start Delegating!*

Sharing household chores with your brood (and that includes the husband!) saves you time and keeps them occupied so you don't have to worry what they're getting up to!

### **Your relationship, love and sex**

When you've got kids it's easy to forget about your relationship. As well as 'me' time, your relationship needs attention. Try having one night a week/every two weeks or even every month where you organise a baby-sitter (perhaps the grandparents would be happy to volunteer?) and have a romantic night out or in but definitely without the kids.

### **Physical well-being**

*Exercise*

Another great way to make you feel better physically and mentally is to exercise. It doesn't need to be an hour at the gym, it can be as little as 10mins. So wrap up warm, pop the little one into the pram and go for a brisk walk in the winter sun or go for a stroll in the park in the summer warmth.

You can gradually begin to build up the level of exercise.

### **Top tip**

Join a gym that offers crèche facilities with a few friends and make it a weekly meet up for some 'me' time and exercise that booty! Some gyms also offer postnatal classes specifically designed to help you tone and shape your body after pregnancy.

## PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES <sup>1</sup>

If you've ever worn an absorbent pantyliner or pad because you worry about accidentally wetting yourself when you exercise, garden, sneeze, or cough, you're not alone. These forms of stress incontinence are common bladder control problems. They affect up to 50% of women at some point in their lives, according to the American Urological Association.

Your pelvic floor muscles prevents embarrassing accidents by supporting your pelvic organs. These muscles, located between your legs and attached to your pelvic bone, may be weakened by pregnancy, childbirth, obesity, menopause, or aging. Yet bladder control problems are not a normal part of life, at any age.

There's good news: You can make your pelvic floor muscles stronger through exercise, just as you strengthen your other muscles for good health. Exercising your pelvic floor muscles regularly helps reduce or eliminate leakage problems. If you are pregnant, or have other medical conditions, be sure to consult your health care professional before beginning these exercises.

*Success depends upon two steps—finding the right muscles to work and exercising them correctly:*

#### **Find your pelvic floor muscles by:**

- Trying to stop your urine flow while on the toilet.
- Squeeze the muscles you'd use to stop passing gas.

#### **To exercise these muscles:**

- Pull the muscles in, without holding your breath. Count to three as you hold the muscles tight.
- Relax for a few seconds, then repeat. Work up to 10 to 15 repetitions per session. Each session should take about five minutes.
- Aim for three sessions per day. Do the exercises while lying down, sitting, and standing.
- Tighten only your pelvic floor muscles. Don't squeeze the muscles in your stomach, legs, buttocks or elsewhere, because that could add to your control problems.

Keep at it, even if you miss a day or two. It may take a month or more to see progress, but pelvic floor muscle training can end your worries about those embarrassing accidents.

## **OUR GUIDE TO POST-BABY CONTRACEPTION<sup>2</sup>**

With a new baby, sex could be the last thing on your mind. But if you don't want to add to your family right now, read on especially as your libido may creep up on you unexpectedly. Moreover, as many shocked parents with a short gap between children will testify, your fertility can come back equally unexpectedly.

Some women ovulate within a week of giving birth. So, if you'd rather have a break before your next baby, make contraception a priority and talk to your GP at your six-week postnatal check-up – or book an appointment beforehand, if necessary. *You still have many choices for contraception and you could consider any of the following:*

### **The Pill (progestogen only)**

You won't be able to take the combined pill as this contains oestrogen which affects your breast milk so ask your doctor about a progestogen only pill. However if you're not breastfeeding you can take the combined pill 21 days after birth

### **IUD or IUS**

The IUD works by sitting inside the uterus and stopping sperm from reaching the egg or stopping a fertilised egg implanting. The IUS works similarly in that it is also an implant that fits inside the uterus, but it works by releasing a steady dose of progesterone, for up to five years at a time. Both are useful for mums who are breastfeeding. Your uterus needs to return back to its original size and that can take between six to eight weeks, so you'll need to wait until then before having a fitting.

### **Injection**

As its name suggests, this contraceptive is given as an injection. The injection is usually given in the bottom, but it is sometimes given in the upper arm or leg. It gives you protection from getting pregnant for up to 12 weeks, but you must have regular injections in order to stay protected.

### **Subdermal Implant**

This is a small flexible rod that is placed underneath the skin on the inside of the upper arm. You can feel it under the skin, but it can't be seen. It must be fitted by a doctor or healthcare professional and lasts for up to three years.

You can also consider non-hormonal options such as the cap or even other long acting forms such as the implant or injection. We've created a guide to your basic contraception options in more detail which you can read by clicking "your choices" on [www.contraception.co.uk](http://www.contraception.co.uk).

1. <http://www.healthymen.org/content/article/exercises-your-pelvic-floor-muscles> accessed on 01/02/2010 at 11:35

2. Based on <http://www.askamum.co.uk/Mum/Search-Results/Sex/Your-guide-to-post-baby-contraception/> accessed on 16/02/2010 at 19:06