



Oh Baby! (Weight)

How to Win at Losing Post-Pregnancy Pounds

by Cynthia Mason, PhD

You've waited nine long months (at the very least) for your little bundle of joy to arrive. You've watched your body evolve into a miraculous creator of life; keeping your baby safe until the time of delivery. In addition to your body taking on a life of its own, literally, you watched the numbers on the scale increase with a mixture of both eager anticipation and dread. Your body, in all its wondrous glory, has grown heavier.

For some women, being pregnant can make them feel their most beautiful and healthiest than at any other time in their lives. However, for other women, pregnancy and weight gain wreaks havoc on their self-image and self-esteem (particularly if they struggled with being overweight prior to getting pregnant). The extra weight gain associated with pregnancy is necessary to provide nourishment to your developing baby.

Following delivery, most women are anxious to lose their pregnancy weight. Nevertheless, women need to have a certain amount of patience with their body. Contrary to Hollywood's portrayal of female characters leaving the hospital wearing their skinny jeans, pregnancy weight gain did not happen overnight and it will probably take at least several months for the excess weight to come off.

Factors for How Quickly You Lose the "Baby-weight:"

Your weight prior to pregnancy:

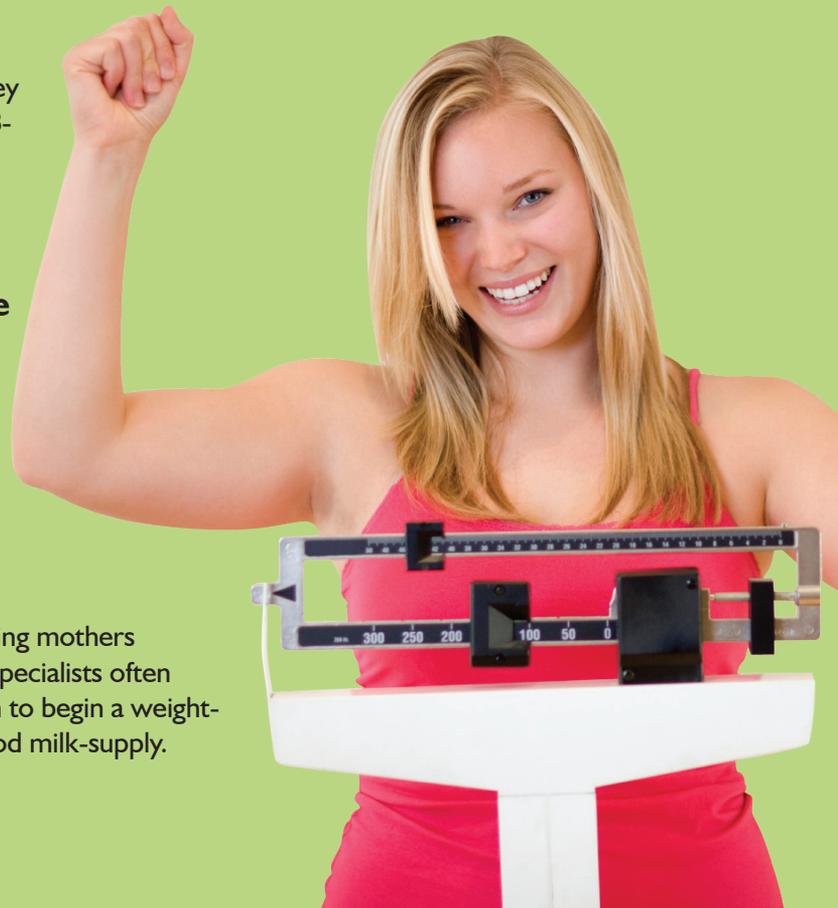
Most women gain approximately 25-37 pounds if they were at a healthy weight before getting pregnant, 28-40 pounds if they were underweight before getting pregnant and 15-25 pounds if they were overweight before getting pregnant.

Whether you had a c-section at the time of delivery:

Additional time is needed in order for your body to fully recover from surgical procedures. Most medical professionals will advise waiting at least four to six weeks before starting any weight-loss program to allow tissue sufficient time to heal properly.

Whether or not you're breastfeeding:

Breastfeeding expends a lot of energy and breastfeeding mothers require extra calories to feed their babies. Lactation specialists often recommend waiting at least two months post-partum to begin a weight-loss program in order for your body to establish a good milk-supply.



Here are 10 tips to help you safely lose your post-pregnancy pounds:

- 1 Don't diet.**

Feeling deprived of your favorite foods when you're already stressed out could actually cause you to gain weight. Instead of dieting, eat a variety of well-balanced foods and keep a well-stocked supply of snacks around to keep you from feeling hungry and give your body energy throughout the day.
 - 2 Choose healthy options.**

Be sure to include lots of vibrant colors on your plates and remember quality before quantity. Load up on high-fiber fruits, vegetables, whole-grain products, calcium-rich foods and lean proteins.
 - 3 Breastfeed.**

It's good for both you and your baby. Breastfeeding helps boost your baby's growth and immunity as well as helps reduce your risk of certain cancers. Plus, breastfeeding moms tend to have greater weight-loss compared to those who bottle-feed.
 - 4 Drink water.**

Drinking plenty of water prevents you from getting dehydrated and helps fill you up so you eat less. Aim for the recommended eight glasses of water per day, although you may need to increase that amount if you are breastfeeding.
 - 5 Get moving.**

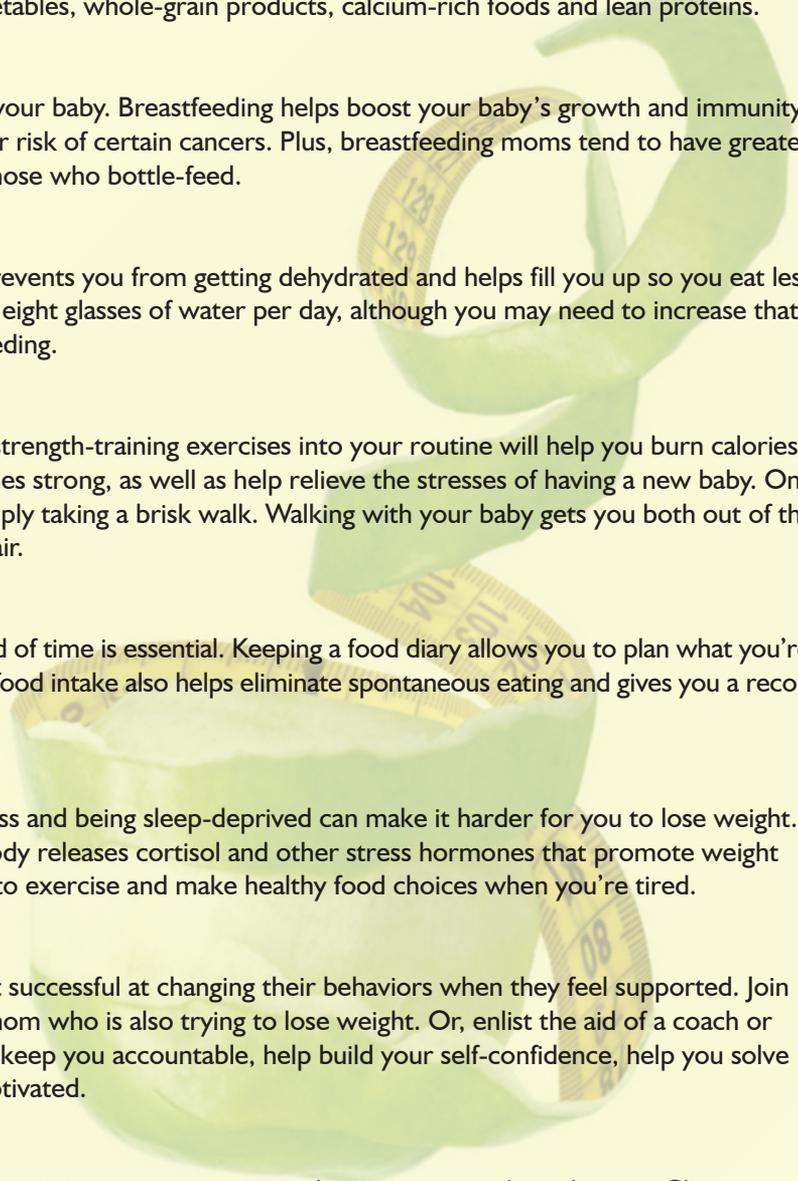
Incorporating aerobic and strength-training exercises into your routine will help you burn calories, keep your muscles and bones strong, as well as help relieve the stresses of having a new baby. One way to get started is by simply taking a brisk walk. Walking with your baby gets you both out of the house and breathing fresh air.
 - 6 Log it.**

Planning what you eat ahead of time is essential. Keeping a food diary allows you to plan what you're going to eat. Tracking your food intake also helps eliminate spontaneous eating and gives you a record of your progress.
 - 7 Sleep.**

Sleep is a restorative process and being sleep-deprived can make it harder for you to lose weight. When you're tired, your body releases cortisol and other stress hormones that promote weight gain. You're also less likely to exercise and make healthy food choices when you're tired.
 - 8 Buddy up.**

People tend to be the most successful at changing their behaviors when they feel supported. Join efforts with another new mom who is also trying to lose weight. Or, enlist the aid of a coach or weight-loss professional to keep you accountable, help build your self-confidence, help you solve problems and keep you motivated.
 - 9 Give yourself credit.**

As your body becomes leaner, it is important to reward your progress along the way. Choose rewards that are non-food-related such as a hot bath, new haircut, smaller-sized article of clothing or even an afternoon babysitter.
 - 10 Focus on what's important.**

Enjoy what little time off you may have from your regular routine. Spend time together as a family and getting to know your new baby.
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Conclusion

Anyone wishing to lose pregnancy weight should get approval from their medical provider before starting any diet or exercise program. Two additional resources that contain practical information on post-pregnancy weight-loss and exercise are: [The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding](#) by Gwen Gotsch and Judy Torgus (published by the La Leche League), and [Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom](#) by Christiane Northrup.

If you find that you are still struggling to lose weight, ask your medical team for assistance. A registered dietitian can help design an eating plan that will allow you to lose weight safely and effectively, while your primary care provider can help monitor your weight-loss and alert you to any medical issues that might be interfering with your progress.

And above all, remember to be patient with yourself. With a combination of healthy food choices and regular physical activity, your post-pregnancy pounds should eventually come off.

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About the Author:

Cynthia Mason, PhD, is a clinical psychologist and Director of Mental Health Services of Associated Behavioral Health in Bellevue, WA. She provides bariatric pre-surgical mental health evaluations as well as post-surgical and weight-loss psychotherapy. She is also the mother of two young children and knows, first-hand, the challenges of losing post-pregnancy weight. To learn more about Dr. Mason, please visit www.abhc.com.



ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



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LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



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