

# Realistic Post-Pregnancy Body Expectations



When **Demi Moore appeared nude and pregnant** on the cover of “Vanity Fair” back in 1991, it triggered an onslaught of high profile pregnancy images that changed views of the female form. Suddenly pregnant women felt empowered to show off their bodies leading to new trends of form fitting, comfortable clothing overtaking the maternity wear racks.

However the flood of images and trend of famous, beautiful women flaunting their pregnant bodies also led to an unrealistic image of women returning to a perfect body immediately following the birth of their babies. This image has made it extremely difficult for women to meet **realistic body goals for their post-pregnancy bodies**.

## Baby Bump Blues

During pregnancy the appearance of your baby bump is a celebrated occasion and something to be cherished and enjoyed. However, having that baby bump after the baby is born can lead to Mum feeling a little blue.

Keep in mind that it takes six to eight weeks for that bump to disappear and even longer for your weight gain to be lost. According to Dr Penny Sheehan, Head of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at



the Royal Women's Hospital at Sandringham, there are many factors that cause that bump to linger.

First, you gain a half of your blood volume during pregnancy and your body needs extra fluid to assist you in handling that extra circulation. Although there is some blood loss during delivery, you still have that extra blood and swelling which can take days or even longer to lose post-pregnancy.

As well, your tummy muscles and uterus have stretched and this is what can make your baby bump look like it is still there. Your muscles and uterus need time to return to normal. That takes weeks. Once your tissue regains its natural elasticity your tummy will resume a flatter appearance.

If the blue feeling is beyond a disappointment in your weight and body image, make sure you speak to your doctor.

## **Paid Beauties**

It is very important for new mums to keep in mind that models and actresses make a living in which they are paid to be "thin and beautiful". They also have the money and professional assistance that allows them to return to their pre-pregnancy bodies much more quickly than most. However, **in the real world your goal as a breastfeeding mum is to provide the nutrition your baby needs**. This means that eating a drastically calorie reduced diet and exercising excessively is not the right choice for you.

In order for your baby to receive the nutrients they need, you have to eat a healthy diet and take moderate exercise once your doctor approves. If you are determined to achieve optimum weight loss, get help. Work with a dietician or personal trainer who specialises in post-pregnancy weight loss so you do so safely and still produce the milk your baby needs.

## **Serious Damage**

Although women in peak physical condition before and during pregnancy can obtain a mind boggling body just days after birth, the average woman cannot. In fact, even women who are thin to begin with and gain minimal weight during pregnancy can do harm to themselves if they try to take on an aggressive exercise programme to lose their baby weight.



According to fitness instructor Steph Sinnott, new mums need to be very careful in their approach to weight loss. As founder of Ireland's Baby Body Fit, she recommends her clients wait a minimum of six (for vaginal birth) to ten weeks (for C-sections) post-partum before they begin an exercise regime.

This view is shared by Dr Giles Warrington. As DCU's senior lecturer in sport and exercise physiology, he says a slow and steady pace for exercise is strongly advised to avoid serious injury. Starting with a slow paced walk is the safest way to begin your exercise programme and this is also a great way to get out with your new bub.

## **Breastfeeding for Weight Loss**

Some new mums are focused on breastfeeding as a way to lose weight. However, breastfeeding for weight loss is a myth. Although breastfeeding does assist in a number of ways, it is not a quick fix for weight loss.

Breastfeeding does help burn extra calories you might be consuming and help your uterus to contract by producing more oxytocin.

## **"Breast"pectations**

Your breasts will drastically change including swelling as your milk comes in. Your darkened nipples during pregnancy might fade, but they probably will not return to their pre-baby colour. The shape of your breasts is likely to change permanently as well.

Give yourself a break and use a healthy approach to lose that weight. You can also find clothing that is comfortable and designed to work with your post-pregnancy body. [Peachymama designs clothing for breastfeeding mums](#) that consider your new shape and the need to breastfeed discreetly and easily.