

After Pregnancy Weight Loss Remedies

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Forward

Crunches, squats, push-ups. Do these words strike stress and worry into your very being? If so, you have nothing to worry about. You, like most of the population, are someone who would prefer it if your excess weight melted off you magically and instantaneously with no effort on your part, at all.

Unfortunately in the real world, life (and fat) just doesn't follow these rules. They have stringent rules of their own which requires that us lowly human beings work hard to melt off any excess fat which we might be carrying around on us.

As a new mother, this means that you not only have the task of caring for your baby, but also of caring for yourself and your figure.

If you are one of those "earth mothers" who are confident and proud with their fuller figure, then you won't worry about an excess pound or two or ten which you might have put on during the nine months when you were carrying your baby.

However, if you are not as comfortable with the pounds and inches which you have gained since becoming pregnant in the first place, then you probably want to do your utmost best to get rid of these excess pounds.

If this is the case, (and I will assume that it is so, considering that you are reading this book!), there are many paths that you can take on the road to regaining your figure. But which one you take depends on a number of factors, key of which is who you are, and your body type.

You will necessarily be able to lose weight depending on if you have the patience to take it nice and easy, or whether you have the body type for it to take it at a slightly accelerated pace, or even whether you have the monetary resources to take it at a speed of mach-ten to regain your figure.

As I said, this depends on many factors. What I discuss in this book, is mainly the ways in which you can safely and healthily lose weight after your pregnancy.

Although you can if you really want to, lose weight at an increased rate this is not something that is recommended for you. The best weight loss that you should aim for, is about 1-2 pounds per week. Anything more than that is simply not healthy.

Before we go any further I also feel that I should mention that I am not a doctor or a medical practitioner of any sort. I do however, know about losing weight, and losing it in a healthy manner.

That said, and I mention this throughout the book, the best thing that you can do for yourself before beginning any type of exercise or diet regime, is to first consult with your primary medical practitioner.

From this individual you will be able to get a better outlook on the ins and outs of losing weight. This is especially recommended for you, ladies, as your body has just gone through the somewhat traumatic efforts of having a baby.

But horror of horrors, where will you find the time to enforce an exercise or diet regime into your already full-to-brimming schedule, not to mention the energy? You barely have enough of both to get you through the day and night, how are you going to manage to lose weight into the bargain?

Very easily in fact. And in case you think that I'm making light of the entire problem, I'm not. In the beginning at least the only thing that will be required from you will be some commitment to your cause of trying to lose those excess pounds and inches.

The rest, as you will see when you read through the book, is a matter of juggling your priorities around slightly and finding the right combination of baby; yourself; family; which will work for you.

And if this seems overly simple, maybe even flippant, let me assure that it's not. Well...it's not meant to be flippant at any rate.

It is however meant to be an over-simplification of matters, but as you read on, you will see that sometimes a simple uncomplicated approach is all that is needed to make things crystal clear.

The Simple Approach

I thought I would begin with this section, even before going on to the Introduction for the simple reason that it is the core of the book, or rather it is one of the core ideas of this book.

I aim to help you at least get a clear picture of what you need to do, and my approach to this is key to how you do this.

To that end, I think I can safely say that what you need is not a complicated look at how you need to lose weight, nor even the facts and figures of losing weight.

What you need is to take a few of those few precious quiet minutes which you have all to yourself, and put your life into the simplest of terms.

Take a minute to sort out what you need to do, and what your priorities are. With a new baby, your largest priority is going to be your baby, seconded only by your desire to get a good eight of hours of uninterrupted sleep!

There, that was easy, right? You have your two largest priorities listed down, now you need to go on and find out what your other priorities are. They will definitely change from woman to woman as each person's situation in life is uniquely their own.

Some of the things you're looking at however, probably go along the lines of cleaning the house, going to work, fixing the meals, taking care of the needs of the rest of your family, or maybe even buoying your marriage.

But what about you? Where do you come into this list? Most of the time the answer will be either, "not at all" or "at the very end". The thing is, this sort of thinking is all well and good if you have all the time in the world to do everything.

The plain fact of the matter however, is that you don't have all the time in the world to devote to everything on your list, and you will know through your own experience that something has to suffer and most of the time this will be you.

Isn't it true that some days you find it difficult to even drag yourself out of bed? And let's not forget the days when you feel the weight of everything waiting to be accomplished too much for you to bear. This is natural.

Almost every new mother will feel overwhelmed at first, until they get a handle on what they need to do, and when they need to do it. That's right, you need to prioritize.

You need to be able to distinguish between the things that you need to do *now*, and the things which can wait a few more minutes or hours or even days.

The fact of the matter is that you need to make the effort and devote some of this time to, you. This is the time you can devote solely (or almost solely anyway), to your needs.

Let me put it in another way: In order for you to be able to do everything else that you need to around the house, in the office, in your daily life, you need to be *able* to do these things.

The more you feel better about yourself, the more you will find that you are not only willing to get through your day, but you will also be willing and *able* to do these, not to mention on top of the world as well.

So prioritize your life, set your goals, and most of all, don't make mountains of molehills. Simplify your life, don't make it more difficult than it has to be.

Break down each problem that you come across, into smaller problems. These you will find are easier to handle than one large problem.

Introduction

Shedding pounds from your body is never easy at any point in time, at least for most people. For some lucky people, it comes to them as naturally as breathing, and for some even luckier people, they don't even have to worry about gaining any weight.

What about the rest of the population though? Those of us who gain pounds at the drop of a hat (or rather a cheeseburger, or a slab of chocolate!), what do we do? We diet, that's what.

We starve ourselves, we go on all the latest fad diets and we eat ourselves back to misery because the minute we go off our diet, there's no way to control our food cravings.

And this is only the beginning of a vicious cycle of eating and dieting that most of us put not only our bodies through, but also our minds through.

The end result? A society of diet obsessed people who don't see any appreciable weight loss results when finally they go back to a normal lifestyle.

That was the bad news. The good news, is that you can lose weight, and keep it off successfully. If I sounded like the spokesperson for one of the latest diets, then I apologize.

That was not my intention, so don't get scared off and think that this book is just like all the diet or weight loss books you might have read, it's not, and I think that as you read further through these pages you will find that it is indeed very different.

For one thing, this is not a normal weight loss book – it deals with weight loss after pregnancy.

If you picked up this book by accident however don't worry, there are still some interesting things to find out about diets and dieting in a healthy manner, and this should also help you to maintain your desired weight for a long time to come.

To begin with

So you've had a baby and now you want to lose those excess pounds. You want to get rid of those wobbly pudding-like bits of your body that are new additions, and you would ideally like to do it as soon as possible.

After all, if the celebrities are losing their excess pregnancy weight, why can't you? But wait. I hear the voice of derision on the air. Well of course they can lose weight you say scornfully, they have all the time and the money in the world to be able to do so.

Not to mention the requisite amount of people to do the ordinary things in life that just now seem to be weighing you down.

That's right. You need to get the house cleaned in some semblance of order so the dust bunnies don't hijack the house while you're sleeping, not to mention the fact that you need to look after your baby.

You need to feed her, you need to keep her amused so she doesn't begin to scream her little lungs out, and let's not forget that you also need to walk the boards at night trying to put the little darling to sleep.

Added to all of that you also need to cook (you have to eat after all, and takeout is just not an option for all three square meals!); you also need to interact with the outside world when you go out to get the groceries, and this entails making yourself look at least marginally presentable.

Was that comprehensive enough of a list for you on the many things that fill your days and nights? But what happens when you throw in a regular nine-to-five job into the mix? When happens then? Everything goes to pot right? Wrong.

Although it seems completely contradictory it is the women who also have a regular nine-to-five who get some kind of relief from the other things they have to deal with at home.

This however, is not conducive to living a stress-free life, as things can and will pile up. The point I was trying to make here was not that working is good or bad.

Only that working mothers aren't necessarily as harried as their at-home counterparts, for the simple reason that they have time to go out and socialize with people who can for the most part string two coherent words together, and who don't blow happy bubbles when you coo at them.

They also have the chance to get away from their day-to-day worries, something that the housebound mother doesn't have if she doesn't give herself the chance. And that brings us to the crux of the matter.

Most new mothers won't give themselves any proper "me-time". They take the weight of the world on their shoulders and refuse to let go of the burden. You don't need to be housebound going outside only to get the mail and the groceries.

The first step in shedding those extra pounds is giving yourself some much needed me-time. And this brings us back full circle to what we were talking about earlier – celebrities and their ability to lose weight post pregnancy.

They have the time to give themselves necessary me-time, as well as the cash to get themselves the necessary fitness coaches, the people to clean their house and put food on the table that is not only good for their diet, but is also something that the rest of the family can eat.

Where will you find the time to do all of that and devote time to your precious new baby? You can already feel yourself becoming stressed, and you haven't even started the best part yet!

Yes, celebrities have the money to make most of their woes go away, but that's about the only real difference. Unfortunately it can be a big difference, but not an insurmountable one.

My first piece of advice to you then, is to trash all of those magazines you're reading. They are really not what you need to be reading to get your weight loss on track.

The simple truth is that you need to concentrate on what you can do to lose those pounds gained during your pregnancy, and not thinking enviously about how this celebrity managed to lose all of their pregnancy-pounds in a matter of months, or how that celebrity went and got herself a fitness trainer to help her lose those pounds.

If you have the money to do this, all well and good. Most new mothers however, don't have that luxury. They need to cook and clean, maybe even go to work, socialize with adults to keep their sanity intact and most of all, they need to tend to their new baby and look after his well being.

And while the last is definitely not a chore, the other items on that list can be.

So you can bet your bottom dollar that it most definitely doesn't help to be bombarded by "success" stories of the celebrities. The bottom line is that they have their own lives, and you have yours.

So live your life and leave them to their lives. Your goal should be to lose any post pregnancy weight in as healthy a manner as possible.

So what's the first step you need to take? Trash those magazines. Get back to them later if you feel that you must, but remember that now is the time when you should concentrate on you, your new baby, and your family.

Speaking of which, if you have any close family living nearby take advantage of them. They are your family and should (most of the time anyway), be glad to help you out once in a while. They might even like it – for a few hours anyway!

Don't be proud, take all the help you can get to give yourself some me-time, and whatever you do, don't feel guilty about it.

You have absolutely nothing to feel guilty about. You love your baby, you carried him around for nine months in your body, and you devote most of your waking (and non-waking!) hours to his wellbeing.

So there is absolutely nothing wrong with wanting to get away from it all for a little time. In fact, it is probably for the best. You'll not only come back refreshed and good-to-go, but you'll also come back with a fresh mind and a fresh eye. Take the time out wherever you can, and you will be better off for it. Trust me.

Just make sure that you keep your precious bundle with someone whom you know to be responsible – it's no use marring your prized me-time worrying about your baby-sitter!

You and weight loss

Whether you're doing clenches, crunches, squats or push-ups, whether you're breastfeeding or bottle feeding, or whether you're walking the boards at night trying to get your new bundle of joy to sleep for even ten minutes.

Whether you're out every morning walking the block in an effort to entertain yourself and your baby, or whether you are curled up in your grandmother's rocking chair trying to get some sleep, you will without a doubt be losing some of the weight you put on during those nine months previous to having your baby.

Or in other words, you will be losing some of the weight you put on during the nine months which you took to be your license to eat anything and everything you wanted to, because you were naturally enough, "eating for two".

The only problem is that you aren't losing weight fast enough to suit you, or maybe, despite everything, you're not losing weight at all. This can be a definite problem, especially if you never had to count calories, or watch the food you ate before this.

The problem here is not the fact that you aren't getting enough a workout going about your daily business, but the fact that the workout you're getting has not been taken advantage of.

You're already burning more calories than you realize by just doing the normal work that you need to. Things like pacing up and down with a baby in your arms, is no small amount of exercise when you stop and think about it.

And don't forget breastfeeding your baby. If you are doing this, then you will most definitely burning a few extra calories. What happened then to stop you from losing any weight, (because you know that your old jeans are still too snug to wear out in public!).

As I said, the problem stems not from the fact that you're not getting enough exercise, but more than likely from the fact that you are not taking advantage of all these calorie burning workouts you're getting.

Of course, there are other factors which you need to take into account, such as whether you're getting the right foods into you at the right time, not to mention the fact that your body structure also comes into play here.

If you are one of those people who does not easily lose weight despite all the correct steps you take to do so, you might find that you have a little longer to wait to see those pounds come off than other new moms who shed their pounds faster.

However, there's nothing to despair over as you can be assured of losing those pounds and inches, it's just a matter of time, and effort. You can also consult with a physician to see what course is best suited for you.

In fact, all you new mothers out there looking to lose weight after the birth of your child, should first consult your physician. You will find that this individual is remarkably well equipped to give you the knowledge that you want in the matter of losing weight.

Once you have consulted with your physician, you will then find that you are able to get a better handle on your life, and what you can do to deal not only with the excess weight you seem to have accumulated, but also how to deal with losing those pounds while still giving the most possible attention to your new baby.

Don't get discouraged

First off, I would like to start this out by saying: Don't get discouraged. It took you time to gain the weight in the first place, so don't be surprised when it takes you time to lose the weight as well.

Like I said earlier, it doesn't matter what the latest celebrity mothers are doing, or how fast they are losing their post baby weight. The best thing that you can do now would be to concentrate on yourself, and not on anyone else.

So the first thing is for you not to become discouraged when the weight doesn't come off within the first few days of your deciding to lose weight, miracles do happen, just not those related to instant weight loss!

The best thing that you can do before beginning your diet is to get yourself resigned to the fact that your excess weight will take time to come off.

Once you have come to terms with this, and with the fact that the hard work you need to do along with the time you need and the excess weight you're carrying, is not going to melt away magically like it does in all those heartwarming movies, you will have a good basis to begin your weight loss regime.

The first thing that you need to do after that, is to brave the big bad scales and weigh yourself. Once you have done this, you should also then take out a measuring tape and measure the relevant places such as your waist, hips, arms, bust etc.

This will provide you with a double advantage on those days when you find the scale to be stuck on one annoying number.

This way, instead of becoming discouraged at the lack of any progress on your part, you can instead measure your waist, hips, arms etc., because sometimes although the scales won't show any difference, the measuring tape will show you some heartening evidence of progress.

And, I've mentioned this throughout the book, but here it is to begin with. If you have a bad day and you go on a binge, or you just fall off the weight loss wagon for an entire week or maybe even for an hour, don't stress yourself about it.

Everybody has their bad days, and you're definitely entitled to your own bad days. Take it in stride and go on with the way you were, get back on that weight loss wagon, don't let it leave without you!

Be sensible

You need to be sensible about losing the weight you have gained during those nine months. Remember that it took time for you to put on the weight, so it will naturally enough take time to lose it.

Like I said, it's best not to expect miracles and become discouraged from the very beginning. Be sensible when choosing a weight loss regime for yourself.

Take into account various factors such as,

- Your baby's needs – Baby's needs will always come first as it should be, and if you have more than one child, you can be assured that you will become adept at doing a juggling act.

And these will almost always come first before any weight loss ideas that you might have.

- Your needs – Although the entire weight loss thing might be going along with what you ultimately need, there's more to your life than just losing weight.

There are other commitments and constraints on your time that you also need to factor in when you are looking at a suitable weight loss plan.

- The time you have on your hands – Be realistic about it. Sure there's the amount of time that you would *like* to devote to your weight loss regime, and then there's the actual time you will have on your hands on a daily basis.
- Let's not forget the amount of commitment and effort you're willing to put into it – If you know yourself to be a straggler and a procrastinator, then you should also assume that there will be days when these tendencies will get the best of you.

Therefore you also need to take into account these tendencies and make allowances for these.

Your baby doesn't understand your desire to lose weight

This is one thing that you need to take in almost from the beginning...wait, didn't I already say that for something else? Yes, I did, and you can be

assured that I will be saying it again later on in the book as well for something else.

This is because there *are* some things that you need to look at before jumping head first into the world of weight loss.

On the subject at hand, let's take a look at how difficult or easy it is to try and lose weight when you have the demands of small baby to contend with.

I can just hear the choruses of "Difficult!" or "Are you out of your mind!" or even "Who has the time to sit down and think about these things!" going through your mind right about now.

And that's perfectly fine, I won't even get offended by the "Are you out of your mind!" bit! But really speaking, I have to say that each and every one of your thoughts right now on the subject are probably to some extent true, both the good thoughts and the negative ones.

The negative ones for instance have their root in your past experience with trying to get anything done, on time, and in a sane manner.

If you've also only just had your baby, you might feel that it is beyond you at the moment to even think about losing weight.

That's also fine; you picked up this book so that means that you have some interest in it, and by reading it, you will find that when the time comes when you want to lose weight, you will be ready for it.

For those of you who want to lose weight, are ready for it, but have too much on your plate right now, I urge you to read the book further, I have included as best as I can, a number of things that you can do without having to resort to a special weight loss regime.

This won't make you lose weight at a fast or regular rate, but you will lose some weight, and best of all, you will also find that just by doing a few of these things at least, you will begin to feel better about yourself.

The main thing to remember here though, is that no matter what your ultimate outcome is, whether you decide to go on a weight loss course of action or not, your baby won't really understand either way.

Her needs will always come first, and in this you will find that your own needs will have to take a backseat. Sometimes it just won't be possible for you to eat regular meals, at regular times. It will also be impossible for you to get any amount of proper sleep.

You will find that sometimes you are so swamped with looking after your baby, that you have no time or energy left over for yourself. This is a very normal occurrence, especially if you have no one else with whom you can share the responsibilities of looking after her.

Whatever the case though, you will find that no matter how good your intentions are, that you will fail. This is alright, just don't become discouraged.

You can't control every aspect of your life no matter how hard you try, and this becomes especially true when you throw a small bundle of joy into the mix.

Something else that you will also want to look at is how much time and effort you can put in to your weight loss regime. I went through this in the earlier section as well so I won't go into it here again.

Just as long as you know exactly what you're up against, and the ways that you can get around it, you should be on your way to losing those post pregnancy pounds and inches.

What you gained – what you should lose

“Nine months on – nine months off”

When looking at losing the weight you gained during your pregnancy, this is a very good rule to follow. If it took you nine months to out on the weight, isn't it feasible and to expect to take nine months to lose it as well?

In general a woman will gain between 20-30 pounds during her pregnancy (some people say that you can expect to gain between 25-35 pounds, so ask your doctor which one he goes by, and which one is more applicable to your case).

Of that weight you gained, you can expect to lose about 10-15 pounds. This means that you are left with an overall weight gain of about 10-15 pounds to contend with.

And this is only the overall average weight gain that you can expect. But since average is only a number, some women can expect to gain in excess of these numbers although your doctor would have advised you as to the best possible weight you should have maintained during your pregnancy.

There's also the factor that if you were not slim before getting pregnant, you might find yourself faced with a few extra pounds other than those which you gained during pregnancy, to contend with.

When everything adds up, it can be disheartening, but dedication and perseverance can do wonders for you.

You will also find that sometimes you have to deal with post pregnancy complications as well, which can significantly prolong the time you need to wait before you can begin a successful weight loss plan.

Then there is also the fact that sometimes your body just might protest at being put through additional strain in the form of needing to lose weight, and these factors will all come into the equation.

So although you might find that you want to lose weight as fast as possible, your body might not be ready for this additional burden.

Give yourself time to fully recover from the ordeal of giving birth, and if anyone tells you that you really don't so much time to recuperate from a perfectly normal process, I suggest you ignore them.

Every woman's body is different and the time it takes each woman to recover from the process of childbirth varies. Ask your doctor for the best possible time that you can begin your weight loss regime.

You should also keep in mind that although some people advocate that you need to lose weight in the first year to be truly successful this is not necessarily true.

You can lose the weight whether you have passed the one year mark or not. Either way it will just take time and dedication on your part to achieve successful weight loss.

Aim to lose about 1-2 pounds per week. This is a healthy and realistic goal for a new mother. You won't be going on any fad diets, or stringent diets where you will radically lose weight, besides which, it is simply not healthy for you to lose weight rapidly.

A gradual weight loss, although sometimes frustrating, will give you better results. You will also find that you are better able to deal with keeping the weight off when you have finally reached your target weight, because you have incorporated a healthy *lifestyle* weight loss regime into your plans.

If however, you hit a plateau where the weight simply refuses to budge, you might want to consider using another tack to lose weight. Change things around so that your body doesn't get too comfortable and settled into one routine.

This might constitute more work for you as you need to once again change things around in order to lose the weight but you can be assured that the overall result will be well worth the extra effort taken.

If after everything, you find that you are simply not losing weight in any satisfactory manner, you might want to consider changing your diet and weight loss plan to something else.

Or you might want to consider consulting your doctor to see if there is something else you can do, and also to rule out any underlying medical conditions which might be preventing you from losing weight satisfactorily.

Talk with your doctor

I actively encourage new mothers to talk with their doctor before embarking on any course of activity to reduce their weight. *This is the same whether you are a new mother, or whether you already have one, or more, children.*

You might have gone through the entire birthing process many times over, but that doesn't change the fact that every time is different from the last time.

That is why you need to treat each birth as if it were the first one when you're thinking about subjecting your body to a weight loss regime.

There could be factors affecting you of which you are fully unaware of, or there could be extenuating circumstances which make it best for you to take it easy on the weight loss front.

Consulting with your doctor before embarking on any such course of activity is the safest thing that you could do.

If you're having trouble deciding exactly what type of questions you should be asking your doctor, here's a sample few ideas which you might use.

These are only general ideas on the things you need to know about, so you will obviously want to tailor your questions to better suit your own situation.

- When can you safely begin a weight loss plan
- What type of weight loss plan is best for you
- Is it safe for you to diet right now, especially if you are breastfeeding
- Can you safely do exercises
- If not, then what kind of gentle activity can you do to keep yourself moving about
- If you can exercise, then what course of action is best suited to tackle it

What you can do about it

Isn't it a glorious thing, this need for losing weight that we seem to have? Not really, but unfortunately it does seem to be part and parcel of our lives these days.

Even if we don't secretly aspire to look like today's image of what a perfect woman (or man) looks like, we are now more health conscious than ever and we find that anything resembling flab on our bodies is just not the thing.

To this end, most of us will fight tooth and nail to reduce our weight, even if it is to a large extent, only in our minds! But then again, the war on fat must first begin as a germ of an idea before it can become a fully fledged, out-and-out war, so I guess that's alright.

The thing to keep in mind here though, is that at some point you need to take the war to the battlefield – it can't forever stay in our minds!

That said, there are many things which you can do to lose weight, and unfortunately most of them, especially the quick fix methods where you can "instantly" lose about ten pounds from those troublesome areas, is just not what you want to be looking into after you've had a baby.

Besides, although instant gratification is great on one level, what you're ideally looking for is to lose the weight and keep it off. Most times, instant gratification just doesn't deliver the goods in this way.

Most times in fact, you will find that you are gaining the pounds you lost, instead of losing more, or even keeping it off. This is definitely not what you need.

There's also the little factor that as a new mother, you will need all the energy you can get, and if this comes from a healthy source such as good eating, you will find yourself better off in the long run.

Sugary snacks and drinks can in no way whatsoever make up for the solid boost of energy you will get from eating healthier foods.

Obviously there are some things that you can't do to lose weight after you've had your baby, and one of them is to go on a strenuous exercise jag, or even on a crash diet. These are No-No's, no matter whether you had your baby by a normal birth or otherwise.

Your body needs time to adjust to all the radical changes it's been undergoing for the past nine months and it's unrealistic to expect miracles from yourself.

This is also why you need to take things easy and stay away from the latest fad diets that are doing the rounds.

Put plainly and simply, these are not good for you. They will not cater to the needs of a new mother, and in most cases will more than likely be detrimental to the overall health of the new mother.

What you ideally need is to take things as easy as possible on the weight loss front at least in the beginning and then ramp-up from there onwards. For one thing after nine months of more or less indulgence, your body needs to get used to eating less.

For another thing you will find that anything in the way of strenuous exercise is just not possible, for a number of reasons. One of them being, that you might not have the energy left over to do this after spending all day and night looking after your baby.

Gentle exercise can help you in the beginning, but even that, although it is advocated by most doctors that you get up and walk about as soon as possible, needs to be taken on an individual case by case basis, as the needs of every woman will change.

Listed below are a few of the things which you can do to help yourself, but these are only just ideas to help you get a start. And remember to always consult your doctor before beginning on anything that will impact you, your weight and your body.

Remember that your baby needs a healthy mother right now, not one who is slim, and certainly not one who doesn't have the energy to even play with them. Lose weight, but gradually, and find out how to do it in such a way that you won't be adversely affected by it.

Learn about nutrition not diets

This is actually not something that most people will do. When they decide they want to lose weight, they will either turn to the latest fad diet to help, (which in your case, shouldn't be an option!), or they will go on a diet of their own contrivance.

These are all well and good if you know exactly what it is that you're doing. However, losing weight simply for the sake of losing weight isn't going to help you any.

It's not going to help you to lose weight in a healthy manner, and it certainly isn't going to help you to keep the weight off either, because let's face it, most of us don't have the desire to keep a diet going for a long period of time.

This is also one of the reasons why there are so many diets around these days offering us instant weight loss. Luckily (or unluckily) for you, a new mother should stay away from these type of diets as I mentioned earlier.

And this unfortunately leaves you with only one choice (well two really if you have the money to spend on a personal fitness trainer and nutritionist!), and that choice is the one which allows you to lose weight slowly, safely and healthily.

And since this is the choice you are left with, there are two ways in which you can go about this. The first method is where you consult with your doctor and take his recommendations as to what is the right course of action.

The second method, is where you consult with your doctor, get his recommendations, and then go out and find out some of the necessary information for yourself.

Find out why some foods are good for you and why some foods are not. Find out what foods are better for you, and find out what foods you should stay away from.

Basically, just learn what you can about how different foods affect your body, and how different foods can affect you in a positive manner.

And if you feel that you don't have the time to go and out and search for this information, if you feel that you don't have the time or the inclination to

go through nutrition books, then might I suggest a better, easier and faster way of going about it: the Internet.

That's right, the World Wide Web has just about all the information you could want to know about nutrition, and although it is not necessarily a good replacement for a doctor's firsthand advice, it can help you greatly in your endeavors.

Think twice about whatever diet you're going on, and learn the facts behind the diet, this can help you in the long run to lose the weight and *keep it off* for a long time to come. It will also help you to understand what type of exercise you need to do, etc.

Exercise does help

There are any number of us who hate not only the thought of exercising but also everything that goes along with it. Or in other words, we hate exercising! This means that we will do whatever we can to get out of exercising.

This is all well and good if you like and are comfortable within your own skin, but it is a sad fact that if you want to change, want to become healthier, or want to lose weight, exercise is a must.

It should be on your horizon day after day, and although this can sound like a life sentence to some of us (myself included!), if you go about it the right way, it needn't be so bad.

The first thing that you want to do is decide how much weight you want to lose, if it's not much, then gentle exercise will probably suit you fine coupled with a healthy diet.

If you need to lose more than a couple of pounds however, and this will be the case for most new mothers, you will find that you need to go at it slightly stronger than you normally would have.

To paraphrase a famous line, to exercise or not, that is the question. As I have stated before you don't need to exercise to lose weight, it just helps

– a lot. But first you will need to get the green light from your doctor on whether to exercise, and when is the time for you to start.

Once these things are in place you can then go about finding out what type of exercise is best for you. Do you want a gentle exercise that you can fit in and around your daily schedule, or would you prefer something that is slightly more strenuous. It all depends on you.

If you have nightmares about school and the humiliating and excruciating episodes of gym class, there is no need to worry. The one thing that is entirely optional for you is a trip to the gym.

If on the other hand you feel that going to the gym is a better option for you to help you lose weight, then by all means do so, but remember to first get your doctor's advice on what you should and should not do.

For instance you might not want to go on the exercise bikes for some weeks or months following the birth of your baby!

Other than that, if your doctor gives you the go-ahead, you might want to even look at doing some of the exercise which I have given at the very end of the book.

These are very simple exercise which can be done at home by yourself, and some of them can even be done with the help of baby if you so wish! These are great if all you want is a simple workout that will keep you fit.

It's also great if you have limited time to spend on your exercising, as they can be done in the comfort of your home. If on the other hand, you feel the need to get out and about you can always try something that falls in between going to the gym and staying at home.

A few ideas, include,

- Yoga
- Dance
- Pilates
- Aerobics Class

- Tai Chi
- Karate – if you want something livelier
- Jogging/ Walking with a group of friends
- Or if you wanted to you could always join an exercise group. There are plenty around that cater specifically to new mothers.
- Or if you want, you can find an exercise buddy with whom you can do your workouts. It's always nicer if there is someone else around to share the joys of exercising!

These are a great place for you to start with and you will find that they also provide you with some adult company and adult conversation. This in turn can be a great bonus for you, as spending all day every day talking baby-talk is not good for you peace of mind.

A good diet is always a must

Along with exercise, this is the single most beneficial thing that you can do to help you lose weight. Unfortunately it is also a fad word that many people toss around all too casually, and for some people it can even be a four-letter word if you get my drift.

The reason for this is because there are just too many connotations and bad memories associated with the word “diet” for many people to take to it willingly.

For me at least, the word “diet” used to conjure up such nightmares as starvation and deprivation of all the foods which I hold so dear. Luckily with a new positive outlook on losing weight, the visions associated with going on a diet were changed.

Now whenever I hear the word “diet”, I think healthy foods and nutrients all rolled into one. I think of a good meal which includes all the necessary foods, and I think of fruits for snacks instead of fizzy drinks and cookies.

That was the spiel. Now for the reality. That is most definitely what I visualize whenever I hear someone talking about a diet, but the sad truth of the matter is that I'm not a saint and therefore I fall, many a time, and painfully.

Yes, I follow my own advice and eat healthy meals, and yes, I do eat lots of fruit, in fact, I prefer fruit, over cookies and fizzy drinks when I'm hungry between meals.

But there are times when being good and proper just don't cut it. I have to confess that I do go back to my old bad eating habits, but not for long, and only once in a while. At these times I satisfy my cravings for high-fat, high-calorie foods and damn the consequences!

This is the method that works best for me as I find that I cannot sustain a rigid imposed diet for an extended length of time. And this is what you need to do when deciding on a diet for yourself. You need to find one that works for you.

One that works with your strengths as well as your weaknesses; and one that will take into account your busy schedule, and which will be forgiving when the schedule intrudes upon it.

This might sound a like a lot to ask from a simple diet, but I prefer to think of it more along the lines of a change of lifestyle instead. Because really, this is what you need to do.

You need to change your lifestyle to suit the body that you would ideally like to have, and unfortunately for us this doesn't include your favorite takeout or pizza every night!

In other words, you need to learn to eat in a healthy manner for just about every meal. You will also need to reprogram your thinking to take in the fact that eating healthily, doesn't have to be a big hassle.

It is entirely possible to eat a healthy meal without having to resort to using every single appliance in your kitchen. I have included some easy recipes in the section funnily enough entitled "Ten Easy Recipes"!

And if you look closely enough you will find that these recipes tell a story in and of themselves. Just because you should be eating healthily, it

doesn't mean you need to pull out all the stops and weigh, measure, cut and chop your every food to a certain exact guideline.

It also doesn't mean that you have to use only the healthiest of ingredients when you're cooking, nor does it mean that you will have to stay away from such things as oil.

Although most fitness gurus will recommend this option to you, I believe that moderation is the key. Anything in large quantities is bad for you, and this applies to the use of cooking oil as well. Use these in moderation and along with a well balanced meal you will find that it is not so bad for you.

Use it in excess, and you will find yourself suffering for it. Or if you personally feel that some foods are just not good for you (like oil), you can make a concession to these and use healthy substitutes, or do away with them completely.

Just remember though that just as an excess of certain foods is bad for you, so is a shortage of certain foods not good for you. Moderation is most definitely the key here, and is the one thing that you should allow to dominate your thoughts when it comes to dieting.

When you begin on this lifestyle change you might find that after a time it becomes difficult to keep it up; that you can't find new and inventive ways to cook the same old thing; that you can't come up with new menu ideas.

Having to cope with all of that on top of having to do everything else is a surefire way to lose your interest in your diet altogether.

So before we part ways for this section, I will leave you with this little piece of advice: you don't need to come up with a new and exciting menu everyday.

The old foods work because we like them, because they taste good, and because they do the job they were intended to do, which is to fill us up.

Leave the new and exciting menu items for those days when you have the time to wrap your head around it, when you have the energy to do it, and when you feel in the mood to do it.

There's nothing more dampening to a good home cooked meal than bad tempers and soggy, burned or overcooked food because you weren't in the mood to cook.

Use the old standbys, that's what they're there for, just change things around here and there so you don't get a consistent menu of the same items day in and day out.

It's a vicious cycle

What am I talking about? Is it the cycle where you have to get up at two o'clock in the morning to feed your baby and walk the boards at the same time; or is it the cycle where you have to feed, burp, and change their diaper?

Or maybe it's the one where you start to eat/ sleep, only to be interrupted by your very demanding little one?

Funnily enough, I'm not talking about any of these vicious cycles. The one I'm talking about has everything to do with you and your weight loss problems.

This is the one where you stress and worry endlessly over the fact that you need to lose weight, then take positive steps to go on a diet or exercise regime, only to worry and stress endlessly that you do not have the time or the energy to follow through on your good intentions.

As you can see, it's a vicious cycle and one that can get even the most optimistic person, down in the dumps.

The first thing that you need to do therefore is to stop worrying and stressing over the little things in life which you have no control over.

And yes, these little things includes such worry inducing items as not being able to exercise on time every day, as well as your ability to stay off the eating binge you indulged yourself in over the last nine months.

Because, let's face it, most women who are pregnant take their pregnancy as the one chance in their lives where they can snack guilt-free on just about anything (and everything) they want.

This is the one time in their lives when a woman can stuff their faces in public and be looked upon with indulgence.

Unfortunately, the changing face of time has dictated that to look the pinnacle of perfect in-health womanhood, she must at all times look svelte with a hint, or maybe more, of womanly curves about her.

At no point must she resemble the (sorry ladies, this is only for example), large hipped, amply curved woman of yesteryear. Curves are out if they are not in any moderation and this has been the cause of many a frustration for many a woman.

When looking at it from a simply rational point of view however, this is simply not the case. It is in fact only a very few women who can look the part of the ideal woman, and even these "ideal" women need to work at it.

Although it is an often lamented fact that no woman can rationally look like this all the time, if at all, it is simply not one that is highlighted enough.

Besides which, for the moment at least this little detail has no hope of competing with the likes of the goddess-like figures of our favorite stars and celebrities.

Most normal women however, look so far removed from the picture of the ideal woman which is being touted, that most fall into the trap of forever dieting to achieve this ideal and forever binging to deal with their normal instincts to feed their bodies!

And even if this is not the case, and you find that you can naturally look the part of the today's ideal woman with only a little stringent mind-control, what happens when you become pregnant and gain all those pounds?

As I said earlier it is easy enough for celebrity mothers to get their old figures back – they not only have the incentive but also the also the means to do so.

It is fruitless trying to achieve the weight loss results that they have, when you are a different woman entirely. For that matter, it is fruitless trying to compare your weight loss or lack thereof to any of the other new mothers that you know of who have regained their pre pregnancy weight in quick time.

Although it might look like we have gotten off track here on the vicious cycle which I was talking about – we haven't. It is simply an extension of the entire thing as it goes to show just what a strain women place on themselves in their efforts to look their very ideal best.

And what happens when this ideal best can't be achieved is the entire problem. It is the reason why there are so many women-oriented gyms and things, why a lot of women feel naked if they leave the house without a smidgen of makeup on, and why they want to hang their heads in shame if they are caught out not looking their ideal best.

When you throw pregnancy into this mix, the waters become ever-so muddier. I say this simply because it is true. When you are pregnant you are encouraged to eat "for two", and not only that you are also told that you look radiant when you gain those dreaded extra pounds and inches.

And while this is all good and well, and goes a long way to assuring you that you are indeed still a woman and not the Goodyear blimp in disguise (!), what happens when the baby comes and you are once more eating "for one"?

You are once again faced with the need to conform to the image of the ideal woman. No one is forcing you to do so of course, this is something that you feel you simply need to do for yourself, to keep yourself happy. And this is all well and good if it is done in a safe and healthy manner, without any undue stress on yourself.

However, when you place yourself under undue pressure to regain your pre pregnancy weight, you also place pressure on everything else that you are doing, because no matter how hard you may try to avoid it, you find that you can't avoid it.

One thing I mentioned earlier, I would like to bring to attention now. I said that when most women are pregnant, they are complemented on the radiant glow they have about them.

And this, I am convinced, is not due entirely to hormones and the knowledge that you are to have a baby.

I feel that it is also due to the fact that this is the one time in your life where you can let loose and be as nature intended you to be: A healthy woman who not only looks like the very epitome of womanhood, but who also doesn't have to go to extremes to look like today's ideal woman, and who doesn't feel guilty for eating!

Five great ways to burn those inches

There are more than enough ways in which you can lose weight, and of these I have named five of what I consider to be the best methods to lose weight. You don't have to do all of them, or even any of them to lose weight, but it can help you.

To that extent, I have listed below the methods which I consider to be good, and after that I have gone through each suggestion, in some detail. Just remember that these aren't the only manner in which you can lose weight, but it can give you a good head start.

1. Breastfeeding
2. Exercise
3. Walking
4. Healthy eating habits
5. De-stressing

Breastfeeding

Not everyone knows this, but breastfeeding your baby can help you to lose weight. Although, having said that, with the positive glut of books and magazines available nowadays on pregnancy and what to do after you have your baby, I wouldn't be surprised if more people knew about it than imagined!

That said, let me just say that breastfeeding your new baby is not an option for many women. This can either be for personal or medical reasons, but if you're not going to be breastfeeding don't worry about it.

If you do have the option to breastfeed your baby, then you might want to take it, as it provides an invaluable experience for you to bond with your baby.

About breastfeeding and losing weight however, that is another matter entirely, and the reason why you are here reading this section, so let's start at the beginning.

To begin with then, you should know that your body gains weight during the pregnancy not only to nurture your baby while he is still in your womb, but also in preparation for when your baby is born and you begin to nurse him.

This is your body's way of storing up on energy so that when the time comes to breastfeed your baby, you have a more than ample source of energy available for you to carry out this amazing feat.

Apparently, a woman who breastfeeds her baby burns up about 500-700 calories per day. That's a lot of calories when you come to think about it.

If however, you are looking to breastfeeding to help you lose weight, don't. For one thing, it won't happen immediately, and for another thing, you will also need a healthy diet to help you lose weight. Breastfeeding alone won't do it.

That said, it is a great opportunity for you to take advantage of your body's natural method of dispersing of the stored fat.

Gentle Exercise

One of the best ways to get some exercise in when you don't have the time is to do it in bouts of about five to ten minutes. This can help the new mother with no time on her hands to get the exercise she needs, without having to strain her already precious time.

This is also another good way to keep you from stressing unduly over the fact that you aren't getting enough exercise, because let's face it, most of us can spare about five to ten minutes of time at odd hours during the day, whereas to give over a full thirty minutes to exercise is just asking for too much.

You can try out some of the exercises I have provided below in the last section of the book, "A few easy exercises", or you could just do your own thing.

Just remember to take it easy the first few weeks immediately after giving birth and to ask your doctor when the best time will be for you to begin exercising in earnest.

Until that time you can always do a little bit of gentle exercising which is not really exercising, but more an extension of the work that you normally do. And one of the best methods for this is the one which I have mentioned immediately after this, the section on "Walking".

That said, if you really think about it you will find that just by doing some of the normal day-to-day activities, you are burning fat off your body. The thing then which comes in is to also regulate your diet to take advantage of this fact, which I have spoken about extensively throughout the book.

Walking

This is more or less one of the best methods for you to use, especially in the beginning when you want to lose to weight. It's not overly strenuous nor is it overly taxing. You can do it whenever you want, and you can take your baby along with you.

You can also probably find a group of other mom's doing the same thing, which is a recommendation all on its own. After all, it's not everyday that you can get a little bit of exercise, keep your little one occupied and have some adult company at the same time.

Of course, if this seems too good to be true, then at times it is, because sometimes you will find that baby just doesn't want to be strapped up in his push chair, or perched in her stroller and be taken for a walk.

On these days you will find that you need to do something else to distract baby and get in that much needed exercise.

On the subject of walking though, let me just say a few words before we move on. I've covered most of what needs to be said throughout the book, but here is one more little morsel for you to chew on.

You don't need to stick to gentle sedentary walks to help you lose weight. You can also "power walk". In this way you can lose pounds faster, and it does become a healthier option for you to pursue.

And not to worry, power walking doesn't entail you walking like a frenzied maniac for half mile, pushing your baby's stroller in front of you.

Instead, one of the better methods of getting in some power walking is by taking it easy to begin with, then gearing up and giving into a burst of energy for about three to four minutes, then going back once more to your sedentary walking.

Oh yes, and make sure that if you are taking baby along with you, that you take into account the cumbersome stroller's capabilities when you are power walking. Or, if you find that this style of walking suits you, you could invest in a jogging stroller instead.

To get any health benefits from the power walking however, you do need to do about five to eight bouts of it. Since you are taking it gently in between bouts it shouldn't be that difficult, although to begin with you might find that you want to take it slow.

Power walking aside, there are other ways that you can utilize the effects of walking, and these include everyday things such as parking the car a fair distance away from the supermarket so that you are forced to walk there and back.

Or if you go to work, then you might want to park your car some distance away and walk into work, and other little things like that.

These don't take all that much time and effort on your part, and you don't have to section out large chunks of your time to do this either, since most of these activities are ones that you do on a regular basis anyway.

Healthy (and sensible) eating

I've covered this more or less in detail throughout the book, and also in the section marked "Dietary habits" so I won't take up too much of your time and space here.

Suffice it to say however, that by following a good, and sensible eating regime, you will aid yourself in losing weight. And the best part is that a sensible eating regime can become a normal part of your life, or in other words, it can become a lifestyle habit and not part of a weight loss plan.

The benefit of this being that you not only get to lose weight just by eating sensibly, but you also have a good fighting chance at keeping it off long term. And this is where most of us fall down.

We get back into shape, losing pounds and inches off our body, then we go off our diet and fall back into a steady downward spiral of weight gain.

Obviously having worked so hard to achieve the weight loss in the first place, the last thing that you want to do is to have it all come back again.

And when that happens, it becomes more difficult to lose the weight, because hey, hadn't you already played this particular record before? Hadn't you already contrived and connived to lose all that weight once before?

It then becomes an uphill task to get yourself back on the weight loss track again, and this time because you're fighting it tooth and nail, you will find that your body is also fighting it tooth and nail.

So I have just one thing to say in conclusion of this section. Make your weight loss-inspired dietary changes a lifestyle habit, and not a temporary thing.

Don't be looking forward to the day when you can stop dieting and go back to your junk food days, because I can tell you now, it's not going to do you any good in the long run.

If junk foods and other similar foods which are "bad" for you, are your guilty little secrets, then don't cut them out of your diet completely. This is just paving the way for craving induced disaster.

Build these into your regular diet so that you're not deprived of them, and so that you get these "treats" once in a while, just enough to keep to you happy and diet on track.

Lose the stress – take a nap

That's right, lose the stress. The best thing that you can do for yourself would be to shake off whatever stress you're having as this is detrimental to your health. And at the same time, remember to take a nap once in a while.

Besides working miracles on a tired mind and body, a ten to fifteen minute catnap will do wonders for any problems that seem overwhelming.

Get your priorities straight. If you're fighting a losing battle with stress and sleep, but you're forcing yourself to stay awake because the house needs to be cleaned up, then make a decision.

Stay awake, get progressively short-tempered and stressed and have a clean house; or take a nap, feel positively refreshed and bursting with life, and be able to clean house later when you have nothing more important to do.

It's a choice ladies, that I'm afraid you will most likely have to face. The best choice of course would be to take a nap and get to the house cleaning later, but old habits die hard and you might find yourself unable to sleep surrounded by all that clutter.

In which case, my best advice would be to go to a room which is relatively uncluttered, have a good nap, and come back refreshed to tackle the house and whatever else life throws at you with a newer outlook and a

spring in your step. So, basically, lose the stress – take a nap. The title of this section says it all.

Dietary habits

This is the part I think where most of us fail. Somewhere, somehow it has been pounded into our minds that to diet means to starve ourselves of the good things in life.

It takes time and effort to change this thought process around, and to replace it with the realities of a good, healthy diet.

So here are the main facts about dieting which you should know about,

You don't need to starve yourself in order to diet and lose weight; in fact this is probably the very last thing that you should be doing.

You don't need to deny yourself of your favorite foods; on the contrary a treat now and then of your most guilt-ridden food can be quite an incentive to keep at it.

Going along with the no-starvation theme, you might want to look at eating meals more frequently. This means that you will need to eat small meals at more frequent intervals.

Junk food is not considered a food group. It is neither a major food group nor is it a minor food group. Junk foods are what are known as "empty calories". They fill you up without doing any perceivable good for you, and in fact, they can do great damage to you.

Eating right doesn't mean eating only one type of food. The food pyramid exists for a reason – to show you the path to eating properly balanced meals.

The ideas I have given below are just that, ideas. They are meant neither as rock solid instructions nor are they the be-all and end-all of a person's diet.

Proper care should always be taken when going on a diet, and consulting with your doctor on what type of diet suits you best, will be to your advantage.

It is also true that you will be able to better formulate a diet that will help you to lose weight in a manner in which your body can safely handle it.

Do's and don'ts

Below, I have outlined a few things that you might want to look into when considering your dietary habits.

As I have said before, these are not hard and fast rules which must follow, they are just ideas and suggestions, most of which I believe to be more common sense than anything else.

Take these in the vein they were meant, and if at all you feel adverse reactions from changing your dietary habits, stop immediately and consult with you doctor before proceeding any further.

Don't starve yourself

This is a great way to hinder your attempts at weight loss. It is also a great way to deplete your body of needed nutrients and supplements. Remember, a car can't run on an empty and neither can you.

You need to eat well, and eat regularly. Skipping meals here and there when you really can't help it is alright, but don't make it a habit.

This also means that whatever meal you're eating, you need to eat well. Don't skimp and hem and haw on your meal portions. Be sensible and eat a portion that is just right for you.

Another thing that you will want to keep in mind, is that not everyone needs the same amount of nutrition to keep them going through the day.

For instance, a person who eats small, frequent meals might need considerably less food than a person who has three square meals a day.

Unfortunately, when we eat outside of our home most of the time we are served a requisite portion of food, which might be all wrong for us. As I said, some people need less food than others and some people need more, so you do need to learn to deal with this as well.

If you're going to a restaurant, you don't need to scrimp and save on your food allowances for the entire week to enjoy your meal. This is just plain insanity.

Instead, if you know you are going out in advance, treat it like any other meal that you have, and take no notice of it before hand.

Eat your other meals like you normally would, don't skip, or cut back just because you're going out. And when you finally do go out, you don't need to scrimp and ration yourself here either.

The whole point of going out to dinner will be entirely lost if you're forever counting the number of fat grams, or calories that is in your food.

It also kind of defeats the purpose to settle for the bare minimum of food or even a salad if you're doing it purely for the sake of losing weight.

Enjoy yourself, eat well. If this is not something that you do on a daily or even weekly basis, then you have every right to sit back and indulge yourself once in a while.

That doesn't mean however, that you need to let loose completely and eat everything that takes your fancy. Learn to moderate, and maybe even share that large piece of pecan pie topped with whipped cream, or that sinfully delicious chocolate brownie.

This way, you will not only get a good meal inside you, but it will also be guilt free. And that really is the basis of a good diet: staying guilt-free when you occasionally indulge yourself.

It's the frequent indulgences that we need to guard against, not the occasional ones!

Give yourself a treat

This kind of goes along with what I was saying earlier about indulging yourself, but is somewhat more specific. You don't need to go out to a fancy restaurant or to your friend's place for a meal, to indulge yourself.

If you know that you are trying to cut back and lose some weight, then you have the perfect excuse here to also indulge yourself.

Give yourself that piece of Belgian chocolate cake you've been eyeing all week long; or maybe indulge in a bowl of sinfully delicious homemade ice cream from the specialty shop around the corner; or maybe you just want to enjoy a bar of chocolate all to yourself.

Well, go ahead. Do it. Indulge yourself, without feeling guilty. You deserve a reward for all the work that you have been putting in lately, and there's no shame in admitting it.

The trick here though, is to make your indulgences, small so they don't overwhelm your weight loss efforts; regular so you don't get withdrawal symptoms; and guilt-free so that you can enjoy them in peace, without the bad feelings associated with going outside your weight loss goals for even a minute.

Since I keep mentioning this entire "guilt-free" thing, I think I'll start from there.

It's simple really, everyone falls down, or falters at least once when they are trying to lose weight. You might find that one day you are simply letting go of your dietary caution and are indulging yourself without discrimination.

By deciding early on in your weight loss regime that you will most definitely give in to some of your needs and cravings, you will be paving the way for you to fall off your diet-wagon that much faster.

You will also be paving the way for you to get back on it, that much faster. Because you are ready for the moment when a craving for a slice of gourmet Tiramisu hits you, or for when you feel the urge to have a slice of granny's apple pie with your full fat cappuccino, you are also ready to dust yourself off and climb right back on.

Most people find that they set such unrealistic goals for themselves that once they fall, and they will fall, they can't get back on again.

By acknowledging that you are only too human, that lack of sleep, that indulging yourself for nine months prior to this, or a simple shifting of hormones inside you, is making you suddenly clamor for the bad stuff, you are telling yourself from the beginning that it is alright to fail.

It's how you deal with this failure that counts. So you fall off your diet-wagon. What's the fuss, right? You just finish your indulgence, get up, dust yourself off, take stock of the damage and get right back on. *Without punishing yourself for falling off in the first place.*

This is also a very large part of the entire guilt-free concept. You need to get back on immediately you fall off, but you also need to leave the guilt in the dust and move on.

So you fell off, move on with your life, don't look back, and don't punish yourself for it. The moment is gone and can never be brought back, so why worry over it anymore?

What makes this method work however, is to keep yourself from falling off regularly and stupendously. In other words, keep the indulgences to a frequent-infrequent timetable, and make them the bare minimum required.

If you want to eat an entire bar of chocolate by yourself, make it the smallest possible sized bar that you can get.

If you want to have your pie with whipped cream and a cappuccino, make it a small slice of pie, with a small dollop of whipped cream (or go without if you can), and make your cappuccino a small one.

This way you still get the satisfaction of having your indulgence, while keeping the damage to a bare minimum.

Another thing that will help to minimize the damage caused by indulging yourself, is to make it the "frequent-infrequent" instance that I was talking about.

In other words, don't make it a daily or even weekly habit. Don't indulge yourself just because you promised yourself you would.

Indulge yourself as a treat to yourself, maybe after a particularly trying day like when your baby begins cutting her teeth, or maybe when she was awake the entire night with shrill demands for your undivided attention.

At these times especially, you will feel much better for giving yourself a much needed break, and treating yourself.

Don't however, have a set day for when you're going to indulge yourself. This can only lead to disaster as it is then very easy to get into a habit. The whole joy of treating yourself, comes when it is unexpected, and when you can consider it a real treat.

Eat small, eat frequently

This is one of the most sensible things that you can do. Unfortunately, as you are well aware, babies don't understand the need for you to get frequent meals into you, at regular times.

So if you can eat small meals, and eat them at regular intervals throughout the day, you will find that it is a great aid in helping you to lose weight.

But if you can't do that because of time constraints, or because you simply don't have the energy to go hunting up a meal for yourself in-between the other main meals, don't worry. There are other methods which can help you to lose weight.

By eating small meals, at regular and frequent intervals, however, you will find that your desire to snack between meals has diminished considerably.

This means that you won't forever be eating those empty calorie junk foods that so tempt you to give up your weight loss efforts altogether.

And the reason for this is because, by portioning your three square meals into a handful of smaller ones, you're actually cutting into your snack time.

The reason you snack is because you are hungry, or rather because your sugar levels have dropped sufficiently that your body needs the fuel to help it run.

By snacking, you give your body some fuel, but not nearly enough. But by eating a small *meal* instead of a large *snack*, you are giving your body the necessary energy it needs, in the right quantity, and at the right time.

However, as I said earlier, it's just not always possible to eat a number of smaller meals. Having larger meals also works, as long as you can learn to control your out-of-control snacking tendencies.

When you feel the urge to snack, head not for the cookie jar or the freezer, but try heading towards the fruit bowl. An apple or banana, or even an orange can do wonders for you when complemented with a juice or a tea or coffee of some sort.

You might also want to try something like some instant oatmeal. Make it with water instead of milk, add a dollop of maple syrup instead of the spoons of sugar that you're used to, and eat it out of an oversized mug if you have one.

The oversized mug can make ordinary oatmeal feel decadent and a luxury, and although the rolled oat variety is the healthier option, the instant variety has its pros.

Using water instead of milk to cook it, makes this a low fat meal, and the maple syrup just adds a touch of warmth and goodness to the entire thing.

As you can see, this is a meal in itself, but it doesn't feel like one, and if needs be, you can take your oatmeal "snack" with you wherever you're going since the oversized mug ensures that it won't spill.

Or, if you have the time and the inclination, you can make yourself a quick fresh fruit salad by chopping up a banana, cubing an apple into largish chunks, and sectioning an orange.

Add a slice of the exotic with a few blueberries, strawberries, or slices of kiwi, and you have yourself a wonderful tasting and nutritious snack.

Use the kitchen scales

This isn't necessarily something that you *need* to do in order to lose weight, it's just one of those things that can help you with losing weight.

You also don't need to do this all day, every day, for every meal. That's just not a practical suggestion.

What I would suggest however, is for you to use your kitchen scales at least once or twice so that you know what you're dealing with.

When you measure out that cheese to sprinkle over your homemade pizza, you will be surprised at how reluctant you can be to use the usual amount that you normally would, because it's so much more than you expected.

This will allow you to see for yourself exactly what you use, and in what quantities you use it.

By doing this, the goal here is not to exactly measure and weigh every portion of food you're going to cook or eat, but to show yourself the size and quantities of the food you're consuming now.

Most of the time, the quantity of the food, if we go along with the cheese example, is way in excess of what you thought you were eating. When you see this for yourself, with your own eyes, you will become a believer.

You will be able to reduce the quantities of "bad" food you're eating, because you now have an idea of how much of the stuff you're eating at one meal. This is obviously not the way to go for everyone, but it can help.

There are of course other methods which you can use, and if you feel that this method is not working for you, you can always create a new method by which to measure your food intake, at least for the beginning portion of your new diet regime.

A friend of mine did just that. She was doing everything right to lose weight but in the end found that she wasn't moving more than a couple of pounds a month. So, in reality she really wasn't doing everything right to lose weight, she just thought she was.

To counter this, she went on a campaign to lose weight, and started with the kitchen scale method, with a twist. Instead of weighing or measuring everything that she ate which was "bad" for her, she put an equal portion of what she ate aside into a separate container.

Again if we go with the cheese example, if she grated cheese over her pasta, she would grate the same amount of cheese into a separate dish and by the end of the day, she could see how much she had consumed. It turned out to be more than she had thought.

This is obviously not a very practical method for all you new mothers out there because besides being expensive – remember that she set aside an equal portion of what she ate – it is also messy, time consuming and ultimately will create more work for you.

What I was trying to get at here though, was not that you need to do this, or even use your kitchen scales or measuring tools, but that you need to be aware of what you're eating, and in what quantity you're consuming it.

This is also why keeping a food journal can help you, and I've mentioned this in a later section entitled, "Keep a food journal".

It's not easy with a new baby to do any of these things, and if you have other kids as well, or you have other commitments, or you need to go to work, you will find that it's almost downright impossible to do them.

What I'm suggesting however, is not for you to slavishly tie yourself to any one idea, but to find one or two that works for you, use it only for as long as you need to, and then discard it, keeping the information and knowledge you gleaned from it so that you can better aid in your diet.

Be honest with yourself

This can be quite a difficult task for some people, as we are so used to deceiving ourselves on a daily basis, about what we eat. It's easy to fool ourselves with the thought, it's only one bite, it's only spoonful, it's only one glass.

Well, I'll let you in on a little secret that most of us deliberately choose to ignore – all of those illicit bites, spoonfuls, and glass or even half glasses of whatever it is you're eating, well...they add up.

That extra spoonful of rich dressing you like on your salad, adds up when eaten every day. That cheeseburger you're treating yourself to because

you forgot to go food shopping, adds up, but not half as much as the drink and the fries that you will probably have along with it.

And that's not all, everything you eat that you know is bad for you, that you know is not going to help you lose weight, it all adds up.

Yes, you do need to treat yourself, and yes, you will fall off the wagon a time or two, but the trick to losing weight is to minimize these times so they don't rule your food world.

The real thing that you need to do however, is to be honest with yourself. If you're not one hundred percent honest with yourself, no matter what you are with other people, you can be sure that you will fail.

The reason is simple. If you're not honest with yourself about what foods you eat and in what type of quantity, you won't know how to curb your dietary habits to make it a healthier one.

It's as simple and as difficult as that. Be brutally honest with yourself. Face up to what you're eating, because you already know down in your heart exactly what you're eating, you just don't want to admit it.

Keep a food journal if you can

I realize this might not be as easy a task for you as some of the things which I have mentioned in the book, but if you can find the time to at least jot down what you ate for the day, it can help you to keep track of your food intake.

The best thing about keeping a food journal is that you don't have to be slavishly at it day and night for the rest of your life. The real reason you need a food journal, is so that you can gain a better understanding of your eating habits.

And with a better understanding of your eating habits, you can then attempt to change them to something resembling healthy eating habits.

Since sitting down with uninterrupted peace is more or less a luxury for the new mother, I won't actually suggest eating into this time by writing down your food habits each day.

Instead I will suggest that you keep a something like a small whiteboard somewhere handy such as in the kitchen. In this way, you can write down what you ate for the day as you go by, or as you finish.

If you don't want this on display for everyone to see, then you might want to keep it out of sight, such as behind a door or somewhere similar.

Keeping a food journal isn't an essential part of losing weight, but it can you a much needed edge.

You will have bad days, don't give up

By now you might be feeling a little overwhelmed and thinking to yourself that you can't do most of these things which I have mentioned, because frankly, you just don't have the time or the energy.

Besides which, with your hectic schedule, it's all you can do to find the time to eat, much less do any of the other things which I've been talking about.

This is not the kind of thinking you want to indulge in. You want to have a positive approach to the entire thing, a kind of "glass is half full" approach, as opposed to a "glass is half empty" approach.

Think about it, you started reading this book because you wanted to lose some of those pounds which you have gained over the course of the nine months. Now, just because the going is getting tougher, you shouldn't back out.

This is when you most need to stick to your determination. You need to follow through on your initial determination to shed those pounds and inches and you need to let go of those negative thoughts.

Sure you can fall off the wagon, have a bad day, or even a series of bad days, but this is where you need to get up, dust yourself off and keep on moving. You *will* lose that excess weight, and you *will* shed those inches.

You've come this far in reading the book, you might even have begun to implement some of the lifestyle changes which I have suggested in the earlier sections.

But don't stop now, if you need to go change a diaper, that's a different matter, go and do that, go and feed your baby, feed your partner, set the house to rights if you have to, but try and come back to this book.

Finish off what you have started (not only reading the book, but your goal of weight loss), and you will find that ultimately, you are a happier person for it.

So what if some of the things I've mentioned in this book are beyond your scope; so what if you don't have the time to go around measuring the food you eat; so what if you don't have the time or the inclination to get in a full workout.

This is where you need to keep your perspective: The world as we know it, isn't going to come to a screeching halt just because you can't do any, or all of these things.

Remember, these are only suggestions. You need to take them as such, and craft a routine that will work for you.

If you're a night owl, and your baby is a morning person, then you're going to make it work right? If your partner has to go away on business for a few days, you're going to somehow manage everything by yourself, right?

These aren't things you planned for, and these aren't things that you could have foreseen, but you manage to work around them and still keep your life ticking the way you want it to.

This is the same approach you need to follow with losing weight.

- You start out with your target: Lose weight.
- Then you make a plan of action: Lose weight, using this, this and this method.

- You fall off the weight-loss wagon and go on a chocolate binge: You minimize the damage, then you get right back on and keep going.

Remember: You are not starting from the beginning – you are just continuing down the same road.

- Something out of your control comes up and you find that your weight loss plans will have to take a back seat for a few days: Keep going.

You don't need to go at it like you normally would, but then again, you don't need to let go of your weight loss plans entirely either – take the middle path, it works.

- You find that as the days go by, you are becoming discouraged: It's nothing to stress over, it happens to everyone. You will get discouraged.

Work through it, even when it might seem like an uphill battle. You will be grateful that you managed to get through it when you finally come out of your slump.

- You find that it is extra difficult to get through the days, especially if you have to lose weight: This is where it becomes increasingly difficult to stay on the path to losing your post pregnancy weight, and this is where things can begin to rapidly downhill.

Minimize. Learn to minimize the damage that you might cause to your earlier triumphs. This way you have less to make up for when you decide to try it again.

- The weight loss methods you're using are either too cumbersome and time consuming, or you find that they aren't working: Nothing is written in stone. You have the power to change your entire diet/ exercise/ weight loss regime – do it.
- You're stuck in a groove, you don't know how to get out, and you're not losing weight either: This one is going to be slightly more difficult than the others, but remember that you can do it.

People don't like change, and this is one of the reasons why you became stuck in your groove to begin with. It's time to change, and this will be difficult, because what you're doing now fits into your lifestyle like a well oiled hinge.

To get out of the rut you will need more than just wishful thinking, you will also need determination, but hey, you did it once, right? You read this book, and you began on a weight loss program that yielded results.

What you need to do is to go back and reassess your life, and determine new goals for yourself. Work from there onwards until you get yourself out of your rut.

- But most of all, you need to set yourself realistic targets and goals: Don't expect to lose all the excess weight you're carrying at once, or in short succession. This just isn't feasible, or healthy.

Set yourself realistic goals which you can achieve and reward yourself for reaching them, it doesn't matter whether you were on deadline or not, you reached your goal, and in the game of weight loss that's what counts the most.

When you reach your first goal, set yourself another one, and then another one, and so on, until you reach your target weight.

When you have done that, you will then need to reassess once more, and tweak things around slightly so that you will then be able to keep to your preferred weight and not go back.

- And in the end you will find that it was all worth it, and that you came through with flying colors: You've lost weight.

Alright, so it's not as easy as it sounds when you're reading it in black and white, but it's not really all that difficult if you break it down either.

Remember the simple approach I was talking about in the beginning of the book? Well this is a great example of that.

Simplify even the largest problem, and you will find that you are left not with one big knot to unravel, but a series of smaller knots and tangles which are far easier to tackle than your original problem.

In other words, take things one step at a time, don't jump the gun, and be prepared to encounter more problems when you begin your weight loss regime.

But by keeping it simple and sticking to your short term goal even while keeping an eye on your long term one, you will be able to get through each sticking point fairly easily.

Ten easy recipes

Just to show you how easy it can be to eat healthily, even when you have the fulltime task of looking after your baby, I have listed below a few recipes (ten to be exact), which you can easily make.

In the least amount of time you will find that you can create a tasty meal, which is also healthy for you. Alright, so it won't be cordon bleu, but then again, who can stretch to looking after a baby full-time as well as cooking cordon bleu!

Stir Fried Chicken

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

What you will need: 1 large boneless, skinless Chicken Breast

- 1 bunch Asparagus
- 1 medium Onion, sliced
- 2 tbsp Soy Sauce
- 3 cloves Garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp fresh Ginger, minced
- 1 tbsp Rice Vinegar
- 1 tbsp Oil
- Salt and Pepper to taste

Preparation: Wash and cube the chicken breast into bite sized pieces. Cut the Asparagus into 1 inch long pieces, discarding the very end of the stalk.

Take a large skillet and heat the oil. Add the onions and stir fry them. Add the asparagus soon after adding the onions, and stir fry both over a medium heat for about 3-4 minutes.

Add the chicken, ginger and the garlic and stir fry for a further 3-4 minutes.

Next add the vinegar, soy sauce and salt and pepper to taste, and stir fry for another 2-3 minutes, or until the asparagus is cooked.

You can serve this with a bowl of wild rice or couscous.

Baked Chicken

Preparation Time: 10 minutes preparation time + 90 minutes cooking time

What you will need: 6 Chicken Legs, cut in two
1 cup stoned Black Olives
1 cup Cherry Tomatoes, halved
20-24 cloves Garlic, keep the skin
Olive Oil
Salt and Pepper
Fresh Basil, chopped (the dried stuff works just fine)

Preparation: Preheat the oven to 350°F. Marinate the chicken with salt and pepper to taste, and place in a roasting tin.

Make sure to keep the chicken pieces all on a single layer. Pack in tightly but don't overlap if you can help it.

Spread out over the top of the tightly packed chicken, the olives, cherry tomatoes, garlic cloves and a handful of fresh basil leaves, chopped.

Drizzle some of the olive oil over the top and place in the oven to bake. You can safely leave this dish to slow cook for about 90 minutes.

Serve hot, with a rice dish, pasta, or even with boiled new potatoes and greens.

Parmesan Chicken

Preparation Time: 15 minutes preparation time + 60 minutes cooking time

What you will need: 6 boneless Chicken Breasts
1 cup Breadcrumbs
1 cup grated Parmesan Cheese
½ cup melted Butter
1 tsp Worcestershire Sauce
1 clove Garlic, minced
2 tbsp freshly chopped Parsley, (dried will also do)
Salt and Pepper to taste

Preparation: First preheat your oven to 350°F. Wash the chicken breasts and leave them to dry while you are preparing the other ingredients.

Next combine the melted butter, Worcestershire sauce and the garlic in one bowl.

Take another bowl and combine the breadcrumbs, Parmesan cheese, chopped parsley, and salt and pepper.

Then, dip each chicken breast first into the butter-Worcestershire mix, then into the breadcrumb-Parmesan mix.

Place each piece of chicken in a baking pan, single-layered. Place in the oven and bake for about 60 minutes, or until the chicken is fully cooked.

Baked Fish

Preparation Time: 10 minutes preparation time + 20 minutes cooking time

What you will need: 1 lb Fish Filets of your choice
2/3 cup Breadcrumbs
1/2 cup Cheddar Cheese, grated
1 tbsp Butter
1/2 tsp fresh Basil, chopped (dried works fine)
1/4 tsp freshly grated Nutmeg, (dried as well)
A squeeze of fresh Lemon Juice
Salt and Pepper to taste

Preparation: Preheat your oven to 450°F. Next, combine in a bowl the cheddar cheese, breadcrumbs, chopped basil, grated nutmeg, and salt and pepper.

Take a baking dish and use the butter to grease the bottom and sides of the dish. Line half of the cheese-breadcrumb mixture along the bottom of the dish.

Next, place the fish fillets over the cheese-breadcrumb mixture. Add a squeeze of fresh lemon juice over the fish fillets, and then cover with the remainder of the cheese-breadcrumb mixture.

Place in the oven and bake for about 15-20 minutes until the fish is cooked through.

The time taken for this will vary depending on the thickness of the fish. When the fish is fully cooked, it should flake very easily.

This tastes good on its own, or with a bed of baby spinach leaf salad. It also goes well with rice, or alternately with a few steamed greens and potatoes.

Quick Salmon Bake

Tuna steaks also work very well with this recipe.

Preparation time: 10 minutes preparation time + 20 minutes cooking time

What you will need: 4 steaks of Salmon
2 Onions, sliced
4 cloves of Garlic, crushed
1 Lime
Salt and Pepper to taste
Aluminum foil

Preparation: Preheat the oven to 250°F. Wash the salmon steaks and set aside to dry while you are getting the other ingredients ready.

Take a piece of foil for each salmon steak, about three times the width of the steak. Lay one steak per each foil sheet about roughly in the middle.

Divide the onions and the garlic between the four steaks, and season with salt and pepper.

Fold the foil over the salmon, bringing the edges together in the middle to create a small rolled up handle. The salmon should now lie comfortably in a foil pocket.

Place these foil pockets in the oven for about 15-20 minutes, depending on the thickness of the salmon.

Remove from the oven when the salmon is fully cooked, being careful to avoid the steam trapped within the foil pocket.

You can serve this garnished with either lemon or lime, over a bed of wild rice, couscous, or ideally with risotto.

Creamy Spinach Fettuccine

Preparation Time: 15-20 minutes

What you will Need: 1 lb Fettuccine

1 lb fresh Spinach, (frozen can also be used)
4 cloves of Garlic, sautéed
½ cup of half-and-half
¼ cup Parmesan Cheese, grated
¼ cup fresh Basil
1 tbsp Olive Oil
Salt & Pepper to taste

Preparation: Prepare the fettuccine according to the instructions on the package. While the fettuccine is cooking you can prepare the rest of the ingredients.

Place the remaining ingredients in a food processor, and chop coarsely to create a creamy sauce.

When the fettuccine is cooked, you can toss the creamy spinach sauce with the fettuccine to obtain a delicious dish.

Season with salt and pepper, pine nuts and some chopped basil if you like before serving. This is a meal on its own, or served with some crusty French bread, or even Bruschetta.

Quick Stir-Fry Couscous

Preparation Time: 10 minutes preparation time + 10 minutes cooking time.

What you will need: 1 lb Couscous
½ cup Mushrooms, quartered
¼ cup Bell Peppers, diced
¼ cup Broad beans, chopped
¼ cup Ham, diced
¼ cup Bacon, coarsely chopped
1 large Onion finely chopped
Salt to taste
1 tbsp Oil

Preparation: Cook the Couscous according to the packet instructions while you are preparing the rest of your ingredients.

Take a large skillet and heat the oil, add the onions and lightly sauté until a light brown color.

Add the ham and the bacon and stir fry for about 3-4 minutes. Next add the bell peppers, mushrooms, and beans. Stir fry for a further 3-4 minutes.

When this is done, add the cooked couscous to the mixture, a little at a time so that it will mix in well with the couscous.

Serve with a side of grilled prawns, or any other grilled meat for a tasty treat.

Black Bean Chili

This is one of those dishes that you can leave on the stove and forget about until the time is right for you to serve the meal. It takes about 3 hours to slow cook, and about 10 minutes to prepare.

Preparation Time: 10 minutes preparation time + 3 hours cooking time

What you will need: 2 cans Black Beans, not drained
1 large Onion, diced
6 Cloves Garlic, minced (or 2 tbsp of bottled garlic)
4 Roma Tomatoes, diced (these taste better)
1 small can Tomato paste
1 tbsp Cumin
Salt to taste

Preparation: Prepare your ingredients and place everything into a crock pot over a medium-low fire. When the ingredients begin to boil, you can then reduce the heat to low.

Leave the chili to simmer on low heat for about 3 hours. Serve hot over a bed of steamed rice, or with a side of mash potatoes, or even a loaf of crusty bread. It's as easy as that!

Cheesy Bean dish

Preparation Time: 30 minutes

What you will need: 1 tbsp Oil
1 large Onion, chopped
2 Celery stalks
2 cups/ 1 can Lentils
2 cups/ 1 can Kidney beans
2 large Tomatoes, diced
2 tsp dried Rosemary
Salt and Pepper to taste

Preparation: Take a large skillet and heat the oil, add the onions and cook until they are soft. This should take about 3-4 minutes.

Add the remaining ingredients *except* the cheese. Cook until the beans become soft, about 15-20 minutes.

Sprinkle the cheese over the top, and heat only until the cheese melts.

Easy Pizza

When all is said and done, sometimes you still don't have the time or the inclination to do anything other than order a pizza. A great healthy alternative however, is to create your own pizza (more or less).

All you need is a pre-made pizza base, and fresh, *healthy* toppings of your choice. Below is the recipe just in case you change your mind and leave off dialing the takeaway number you know by heart!

Preparation time: 10 minutes preparation time + 15 minutes cooking time
(about the same time it takes to get your pizza delivered!)

What you will need: 1 store-bought Pizza base
1 can of finely chopped Tomatoes
¼ cup Mozzarella cheese
¼ cup combined of two additional cheeses

Toppings of your choice such, as pepperoni, ham, vegetables etc.

Preparation: Preheat your 350°F. Place the pizza base to cook in the oven for about 10 minutes, or according to package instructions.

Prepare the rest of your ingredients while the base is initially cooking. When the base is a light golden brown, take it of the oven.

You will first need to evenly spread the tomato sauce over the base. Then spread the grated mozzarella, as well as the cheeses, over the sauce.

Next you can add the toppings of your choice and place the pizza in the oven for a further 10-15 minutes or until the cheese has begun to melt.

A few easy exercises

I have decided to end the book with a few easy exercises you can do on your own. These are all fairly simple, and the ones I have marked as your being able to do along with your baby, are some of the easiest of the lot.

They do however, accomplish what they were meant to do, which is to get you into the groove of exercising, even if it is minimally to begin with, while at the same time helping you to keep an eye on baby.

The one thing that you need to remember when exercising or dieting, or when you are considering any type of weight loss scheme, is to first consult with your doctor about the pros and cons of it.

This is especially important as you have (maybe) only just had your baby, and you will need to rest your body.

Although these days, extended bed rest is not advocated, it is nevertheless the height of folly to go and get on a bike two days or even a week after giving birth.

The same thought process applies to taking long tiring extended walks, jogging, swimming strenuously, and anything that will set you back from a full recovery from the birthing process.

There will be some easy exercises which you can do however, to help you keep yourself in shape. It can also help you to not to become too mired in the various daily needs and duties, which can all too easily overcome you and take you away from your own needs.

The best recourse before beginning though is most definitely to talk things over with your doctor. You will be able to find more information about it in an earlier section entitled "Talk with your doctor".

On the other hand, even if you are a few months away from already having given birth to your baby, you might feel that you have no need to consult with your doctor. This is the wrong way to think.

If you are going to start an exercise regime, or even embark on a daily round of gentle exercises, you should still ideally consult with your doctor. Although the same reasons do not apply to you as to a mother who has only just given birth, you too need to be careful.

One thing to remember though, is that not everyone likes exercise, and not everyone can keep it sustained for any appreciable length of time.

If this is the case with you, and you find that you are one of those people who truly hate to take the time out of your day and exercise, there is one little thing that you should keep in mind. You are already working out every day, most of the time.

How does this work? Well, let's take the everyday occurrence you have now, of looking after your baby. Unless you have a nanny or someone to help you, most of the time you will be looking after your baby on your own.

This means that you will be progressively lifting a heavy weight, for the foreseeable future, or until the little tyke learns how to walk.

Think about it ladies, that's at least nine months if not twelve, where you will be doing weight training, because naturally enough, the times you spend carrying your baby won't all be idle ones.

You will more than likely find yourself juggling a number of things, from cooking to cleaning to shopping. All of these things will come in handy in your desire to lose weight.

Then there's the little fact of cleaning house, and generally looking after things. You might go to work, but isn't it true that you also do some of the housework when you get home? Think of that as another method for you to lose some weight.

And if you're a mother who goes to work, not to worry, there are still ways in which you can exercise without even realizing it, such as walking to work, or maybe even walking during your lunch hour maybe to get to your favorite restaurant.

A little side note

Obviously not everyone has the time to exercise when looking after a baby, but sometimes, and you might be surprised at this, you can exercise while at the same time keeping your little bundle of joy occupied.

And just as obviously there are some exercises which you cannot do while you have your baby in tow with you.

These are best done when you either have a little me-time or when you can be safely assured of getting a solid ten minutes in, either when you have a handy babysitter around, or when your little bundle is fast asleep for ten minutes and you're not bone tired.

The ones which you can do with your baby are the ones in the very beginning. These I have marked especially so that you can get a head start when doing your exercises.

The rest of these very simple exercises can mostly be performed anywhere anytime that you feel like it – even in the middle of the canned goods aisle in the supermarket if you want to!

Just remember,

- don't overdo things when you first start

- consult with your doctor on whether or not you should do any of these, even the simple exercises
- consult with your doctor to find out *when* is a good time for you to start exercising
- don't get disheartened when you don't see results within the first few days or weeks
- take things easy and exercise whenever you can, wherever you can. Make it a regular part of your life

I might have mentioned these before throughout the book in various places, but since we've finally gotten around to the exercising bit, I felt that it behooved me to repeat them again.

But most of all, remember that exercise alone won't necessarily help you to regain that figure you lost during pregnancy. You also need to have a balanced healthy diet and lifestyle to go along with it.

So take these for what they really are, a stepping stone on your way to regaining your figure, and not the entire paved brick road to it.

With baby

These first exercises are ones that you can easily do with your baby. This is a great way to stay in shape and to keep baby's attention from wandering too far.

Of course, this doesn't tend to work as well when your little bundle learns the joys of crawling, walking, or running, but until then you should be fine!

Remember to take things carefully when you are working out along with your baby. Don't overdo things, make your moves gentle and not exuberant, and most of all, remember to make sure that what you are doing won't be detrimental to your baby.

I have placed the easier of these exercises in the beginning, with the slightly harder ones at the end of this section. And if you want a workout

that doesn't involve your baby, these exercises can also be used to get you off to a great start.

However, in the section after this one I have given you a few more exercise ideas that you can use, which will definitely require a little more vigor from you, and which you need to do while your bundle of joy is otherwise occupied.

Take the stairs

I shouldn't really have to say this, but I will since so many of us prefer to use the easier option of elevators. Take the stairs.

Stop using the elevators, they do nothing for you. Only use them if you're too tired to do more than gaze blankly at the stairs, wondering what you're supposed to do with them!

If you can gaze at them with dislike, or actively ignore the fact that there are stairs available, then you are conscious enough to use them! This is an especially good form of exercise if you have to carry baby with you, or even sacks of heavy groceries.

It might seem like the height of absurdity to use the stairs when you have a perfectly good elevator but the idea here is for you to lose weight, not keep it in one place by using the elevator!

So, take the stairs when you have the opportunity to do so, and be a healthier person for it.

Trust me, you don't want to be the person puffing your way up a flight of stairs when the elevator breaks down. You want to be the person who walks on by all those other puffers without thinking twice about it!

Walk around a little bit – explore

This can be done whenever you have a little bit of time on your hands. It not only keeps baby amused and distracted, but it can also give you some much needed exercise.

The goal here is to get some little bit of exercise while you're waiting for an appointment (maybe at your doctor's!), or maybe as you're waiting for something to happen.

Babies are naturally curious and you will find that this is a great way to keep them occupied while you're waiting around.

If you're waiting for an appointment you can ask the receptionist how long you will have wait, and if you're polite enough, you will find that most will give you an honest answer.

You can use this information to go exploring around the premises for the time you have to wait.

At home, pace around

This goes more or less hand in glove with the earlier suggestion, but this time we are at home instead of somewhere else waiting for something to happen.

As I said, babies are naturally curious and sometimes even at home you can keep them busy by taking them around their domain.

This serves the dual or rather triple purpose of getting them acquainted with a wider range of things, getting you some much needed exercise, and keeping their attention riveted on things other than the joys of crying.

Easy Leg Lifts

There are two types of leg lifts which you can do, and both can be done with baby in your arms. This first one is, as the title says, the easier of the two.

Assume the position!: This particular exercise can be done whilst you are seated, and so can even be done when you are feeding your baby or even when you are watching a little bit of TV.

The only requirement is that you are seated, and that your spine is fairly straight.

You know what to do: While you are seated slowly lift the lower portion of your leg (from the knee downwards), up so that your entire leg is now parallel with the ground.

Hold this for a count of five then slowly lower your leg back again. Repeat again, for as many times as you can, or between ten to twelve repetitions.

You will need to do this slowly to get the best benefit from it. You can do this one leg at a time, or both legs at once.

If you're doing it one leg at a time, finish off all the repetitions for one leg first before moving on to the other leg.

And if you want, you can even place a small pillow on your legs to get in a bit of weight training for your legs. You'd be amazed at how heavy even a small pillow feels after a while!

Leg Lifts

Assume the position!: Stand with your legs about shoulder width apart. You need to be upright as far as possible, and you can even hold baby if you want.

You know what to do: Stand steady and bring one leg up straight in front of you, then gently swing it backwards stretching as far as you can, before bringing it back to rest on the ground once more. Repeat with your other leg.

Next switch legs again to the one you began with and this time swing your leg to first one side, then to the other side before bringing it back to the original position.

Do the same again with your other leg. Continue with this for about eight repetitions for each type of leg lift.

Clenches

Assume the position!: These can be done anywhere you like, in the secret of your chair, or when you are cooking if need be, and no one will be the wiser for it.

You know what to do: All you are really doing is clenching your buttock muscles. Clench in, and clench out. Regularly flexing can help you to tighten that fanny.

It's not as good as exercises that are specifically targeted for your buttock muscles, but it does get the job done.

Squats

Assume the position!: Stand with your feet a comfortable distance apart. This should ideally be about 3-4 feet apart. Hold baby to you in a comfortable position. Your back should be straight, not curved or slouching.

You know what to do: Get into your rhythm, inhale and exhale. When you are ready, exhale and slowly go down into a squat. Bend at the knees keeping your spine straight.

Hold the squat for a count of ten, inhale and slowly come back up, remembering to keep your spine straight all the time.

Do this about eight times. You might find it strenuous at first, and might want to limit your repetitions to about four times, but plan to work your way up to eight repetitions.

You can even do a slight variation and hold baby out at arms length for one or two of your squats.

Crunches

Assume the position!: Place a comfortable mat on the floor, because that's where you will be spending your time for this exercise!

You need to be lying flat on the floor with your knees drawn in towards you at a comfortable distance, and your feet need to be flat on the floor.

Place baby in the cradle of your hips leaning back against your knees, only if baby is old enough to do so.

Otherwise, place baby in a suitable chair just in front of your drawn up feet. This way she can see your face as you do your crunches.

You know what to do: This is basically a straightforward abdominal crunch that you're doing.

Keeping your feet flat on the floor, place your hands either behind your head, or if you have baby on you, keep a hold on baby.

Remember to inhale and exhale to regulate your breathing properly. Exhale and lift your upper body up from the floor.

Your feet need to be flat on the floor and you need to learn to use your stomach muscles to help you lift, not your neck, or your back muscles.

It is all too easy to make this mistake, so make sure that you are aware of what you are doing.

Hold for about two seconds, make a peek-a-boo face for baby to keep him interested in what you're doing, inhale and go back down, *slowly*. Don't plop back down, this defeats the purpose!

Do this about eight times if you can, although ten or twelve would be better. As ever take it slowly to begin with, and build up over time.

Push-ups

To do true push-ups is beyond many of us, especially at the beginning of any new exercise regime, so unless you're fond of doing the entire gung-ho push-up routine this variation works just fine.

Assume the position!: Get a comfortable mat on the floor and place baby on the mat. Get down on your hands and knees with baby placed in between your hands.

You know what to do: Remember to inhale and exhale. Get your mind ready for the exercise ahead of you. Brace your weight on your hands keeping your knees on the floor.

Push down to the floor using your arms, going close in on baby. Make the requisite funny faces, inhale and push back up, again using your hands.

With your knees, and consequently your feet, along the floor, you will find that you need less effort to do these push-ups than if you were doing the real deal.

Do about eight repetitions of this exercise, or begin with four and work your way up to eight.

Without baby

This section is all about exercise which you can do while at home. Unlike the earlier exercises however, these are not to be done with baby in hand!

We start from simple stretching exercises and move on to more rigorous ones.

They are not in any particular order, nor do they target any specific area. These are just a few of the exercise which I do which I consider to be beneficial to myself.

Don't mistake this for a proper workout because it isn't. If you want a full body workout or even a more rigorous one, you will want to consult with someone who can tell you what exactly you will need to do, to get in shape.

However, before we begin I have to say that you can also complement these exercises with other activities such as swimming, hiking, power walking, or even cycling when you are ready and able to do them.

These are mainly designed as a gentle beginning if you want, or even to keep you reasonably mobile and fit if exercise is the last thing that you want to do.

Swinging stretch

Assume the position!: Stand with your legs shoulder width apart. Your spine should be fairly straight with no bending or slouching.

Raise your arms upwards, keeping the elbows slightly bent.

You know what to do: First get into a rhythm, inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale. When you are ready to do so, exhale and bend forward slowly *at the waist*.

Your arms should travel at the same pace as your upper body, moving along with you.

Bend forwards as far as you can go, your arms should continue their downward swinging motion till they are high above your head.

Now take a deep breath and inhale slowly, swinging your arms slowly back towards your body reversing the direction which you took earlier, then slowly bringing your body up and into its original position.

Since this is fairly easy, you should try to repeat this at least 8 times if you can manage it.

Remember not to strain any muscles, so in the beginning only bend as far forward as you can. The same applies to the continuing backwards motion of your arms. Only go as far as you can.

Don't worry about it, as you gain more agility in your body you will find that it becomes easier to bend further.

Do the Hula Hoop

This is definitely not as easy to do now as it was when we were kids. In fact doing this with an actual hula hoop was a nightmare in frustration. How on earth could something that was so natural become so difficult?

The truth of the matter is that we are not as supple as we used to be, and even if you had kept in shape before becoming pregnant, it's a good chance that nine months later, you are no longer as supple or as fit as you were.

And that's just for those of you who kept in shape before getting pregnant. What about for those of you who kept their figure but let fitness go to the four winds? Do you honestly believe that you could hula hoop the way you used to?

Nope, not a single chance. But before you rush out to the nearest toy store to get yourself a hula hoop, or before you unearth your old one in an effort to prove me wrong, may I just give a word of caution here?

Ladies you are definitely not as supple as you used to be, accept the fact. If you are going to hula hoop, might I suggest you first work up to it, or if

you find yourself impatient, might I suggest you go at it gently or better still only once?

It is very easy to hurt yourself in the process of trying to regain your lost youth. Don't try. You're you now, and not the you of yesteryear. Work up to hula-hooping if you really have to, or do the gentle variation I have given below, it's much less painful! (Trust me on this one!)

Assume the position!: Stand with your legs about shoulder width apart.

Keep your hands either loosely at your sides, or on your hips.

You know what to do: This is more of a limbering up kind of exercise, but it can get vigorous if you can eventually graduate to a real hula hoop!

Start out slowly, then gain a little momentum. Remember to keep things nice and easy though, you don't have the hula hoop on your hips just yet!

Rotate your hips in a full 360° motion. You should ideally be moving from the hips, keeping your waist more or less stationary.

Do about ten rotations in one direction then change course and rotate your hips in the opposite direction for about ten rotations.

Spinal Stretch

Assume the position!: For this one to work you need to be down on your hands and knees.

This can be a rough on your knees if you're not used to kneeling on the floor, so make sure that you have something cushiony like a small mat, or even a folded cloth, under your knees.

Also, your spine needs to be fairly parallel with the floor to begin with.

You know what to do: Regulate your breathing until you become aware of when you inhale and exhale.

When you are comfortable with this, inhale, and arch your back slightly downwards *lifting* your head at the same time.

Hold for a count of three and exhale. This time arch your back upwards (like a cat does), tucking your head and tail bone, down.

Avoid strain when you're arching your back. This is fairly easy so you can repeat this one about 8 times.

Pelvic push-ups

Assume the position!: You need to be lying flat on your back to do this exercise. The floor is preferable to any other surface, just make sure that you have a mat or a rug under you.

Bend your knees and bring them in towards you to a comfortable position.

Make sure your feet are lying flat on the floor, and that your arms are lying alongside your body, palms down.

You know what to do: Regulate your breathing so that you become aware of when you inhale and exhale.

On a count of three lift your pelvis as you inhale. Your feet should still be flat on the floor, as should your palms.

Hold for a count of five, then lower your back slowly to the floor until your pelvis is once again comfortably on the floor. This needs to be done as you exhale.

You can repeat this sequence about five times to begin with, working your way up to a max of about eight to ten repetitions.

Standing push-ups

This is a variation on the normal push-ups and can be done just about anywhere that you chose to.

Assume the position!: Find a suitable wall or counter and stand facing it. You feet need to be shoulder width apart, and your arms need to be outstretched in front of you resting palm down on the wall or counter top.

You know what to do: This is more or less like normal push-ups. Place your entire weight on your hands which are resting either against a wall or a counter.

To do this exercise all you need to do is to push in against whatever it is you're using (the wall or the counter), and then push out.

Push in, and then push up away from the wall or counter in a continuous motion. Do this about ten times if you can, or ideally about 15-20 times.

Jumping jacks

Again this is one of those exercises that was more easily done in our younger days when we were fitter, but it can be accomplished, and doing a few of these first thing in the morning can lend an invigorating uplift to your day, assuming you have the energy to do so after a night spent mostly awake trying to get your little one to sleep!

Assume the position!: Stand with your legs shoulder width apart to begin with. Keep your hands at your sides.

You know what to do: Inhale, and exhale to get a few deep breaths of the fresh morning air. Extend your arms out sideways and taking a deep breath.

Jump up bringing your feet together. At the same time bring your arms together over your head.

Almost immediately jump up again, this time spreading your legs wide on the floor and bring your hands down to rest against your sides.

This needs to be done in a continuous smooth motion, of jumping, bringing hands, as well as feet, together, then jumping up again and spreading the feet and bringing the hands down.

Remember to start slow, and work your way to doing about fifteen to twenty repetitions. To begin with though, about 5-8 should be sufficient to get your blood pumping.

Twisting lunges

Assume the position!: Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Keep a suitable amount of space in front of you. You can hold a pair of dumbbells in your hands if you wish to give this exercise more impact.

Either way, bend your arms at the elbows keeping the upper arms close into the body, and keeping your forearms away from you, parallel to the ground.

You know what to do: Taking a deep breath, exhale and lunge forward on one foot. Go out as far as you comfortably can with your lunge, twisting your body to one side as you do so.

The foot you lunged with should be straight out in front of you, with the knee bent.

If you can go far enough so that your thigh is almost parallel with the ground this is good, otherwise, strive for something close to this!

You should twist your body in the direction of the leg that you just lunged with. In other words, if you lunged forward on your right foot, you should twist your upper body to the right side, and vice versa.

This is more along the lines of a warm-up exercise, or a very mild exercise and is normally very easy to do. You should ideally do about 8 lunges on each side, alternating sides to get more benefit out it.

Abdominal crunches

See the section on “With baby” for an explanation on how to do crunches. For a harder workout, remember not to include baby when you are doing your crunches.

Twisting Crunches

This is more or less the same crunches which I described in the earlier section with an added twist to it, and yes, the pun was fully intended!

Assume the position!: Lie down on your back same as in the normal crunch position. Bend your knees and bring them towards you.

Remember to keep your feet flat on the floor. Your hands can either be behind your head, with only your *fingers* touching the base of your head; or they can lie crossed in front of you.

You know what to do: Remember to get your inhale-and-exhale rhythm going. When you are comfortable, exhale, then lift up your upper body from the floor. Remember to use your stomach muscles.

The twist comes when you are lifting your body off the floor. As you come off the floor, you will need to literally *twist* your body to one side from the waist up before sinking back onto the floor.

This is easier explained if we imagine that you have your arms behind your head, in which case, your elbows will be spread out.

When you are lifting and twisting in one motion say to your right, your left elbow should go towards your right leg.

If you are lifting and bending towards your left side, then your right elbow should go towards your left leg.

This applies whether you have your arms in front of you or behind your head.

Do as many of these as you can, but remember to make sure that you are not straining any muscles, and remember to use your stomach muscles to do the job, not any other muscle group.

Ideally you should aim at a starting range of about four to five crunches on each side. Work your way up from there, about ten on each side is a good number if you can manage it.

Backwards crunch

This exercise is somewhat like doing abdominal crunches, only in reverse. Instead of lying on the floor and sitting up, you are instead sitting up and going backwards towards the floor.

It can be difficult the first, second or even tenth time around so I would suggest that you take it easy to begin with and work your way towards these.

Also, if you have back problems, these exercises are probably not for you as it can cause you to strain your back muscles if not done properly.

Assume the position!: You need to sit on the floor for this one. If you have back problems you might want to skip this exercise altogether.

Keep a padded mat or a thick cloth underneath you so that you are more comfortable.

Sit down on the floor and bring your knees close in towards your chest. Keep them at a comfortable distance and make sure to keep your feet are flat on the floor.

Your back should be straight, and your arms should be straight out in front of you at shoulder level.

If there is someone to help you by standing on, or holding your feet firmly on the floor, then all the better, and the same applies to the abdominal crunches and the twisting crunches.

However, if there is no one, you can still do this by yourself, you just need to remember to keep your feet flat on the floor at all times.

You know what to do: When you are comfortable in your position begin to inhale and exhale to a tangible rhythm so that you are aware of it.

When you are ready, lean back towards the floor on an exhalation. Your feet should be flat, your spine should be fairly straight and your arms stretched out in front of you.

Go towards the floor but don't actually land yourself on the floor. Go as far back as you possibly can. In the beginning this might only be a few inches, but perseverance will yield ready results.

When you have gone back as far as you can, come back up to your original position, this time on an inhalation.

Your spine should still be straight, your feet flat on the floor and your arms stretched out ahead of you.

Since this is quite difficult for first timers you might want to consider doing this only about 3-5 times to begin with, moving up to a higher number of repetitions as you become more supple.