



WOMEN'S HEALTH

Staying In Shape

(NAPSA)—Joy Fawcett is America's ultimate soccer mom. She recently gave birth to her third child, Madilyn Ray, and in only six weeks, marked her comeback to the new Women's United Soccer Association with a goal in her second game back. Balancing a family with success on the field is second nature for Joy, who is an Olympic gold medalist, World Cup champion and founding member of the WUSA.

Now Joy is joining ERA Max, the official laundry detergent of the WUSA, and active women everywhere to encourage pregnant women and new mothers to maintain an active lifestyle. ERA Max is hosting Fawcett's comeback diary, available at www.eraactive.com, where Fawcett chronicles her day-to-day experience of getting back in shape and offers workout advice for new mothers. Below, Fawcett gives advice for expectant women who want to stay in shape during their pregnancy and in the first weeks after the birth of their baby.

• **Check with your doctor before you do anything.**

• **Start early and be consistent.** It is best to begin working out before you become pregnant. You will be more apt to stick to a routine and will prepare your body for the rigorous changes it will go through. The first and last three months of pregnancy are when your body is the most tired, but working out will get your heart rate up to an optimum level and ultimately leave you feeling more energized.

• **Don't forget the H₂O.** You should try to drink about eight glasses a day. Plenty of water will keep you hydrated and fight lethargy.



Active women often find it easier to resume normal activity after pregnancy if they remain active during pregnancy.

• **Utilize small segments of time.** You don't need to set aside a large chunk of time to maintain fitness. If you work inside all day, use part of your lunch hour to take a brisk walk outside or take 15 minutes at home to lift weights. You will increase your circulation and feel healthier overall.

• **Use free weights.** Lifting weights builds muscle, which is actually more flexible than fat and will strengthen you for the actual delivery. You will also need to concentrate on your arms and upper body, so that you will be able to easily carry your newborn.

• **Walk and talk.** You should be able to carry on a conversation when exercising. Encourage a family member or friend to join you for conversation and a walk. It doesn't feel like exercise and can also help you keep in contact with loved ones.

• **Play it smart.** Remember that you are involving your baby in each workout so don't overdo it. Listen to your body—if you ever feel faint or dizzy, immediately stop what you are doing. Stay away from sit-ups or anything that would put pressure on your stomach or back.

• **Become a gymrat.** Gyms have wonderful resources for expectant mothers. Get in the pool and swim casual laps or try running in the water. This is a great cardiovascular exercise that suspends your belly and takes some strain off your body. Stick to low-impact equipment such as the StairMaster or elliptical machine or join a simple aerobics class.

• **Keep a diary.** Not only will this allow you to write down thoughts during an emotional time, but it will also help you document your fitness routine. This will encourage you as you note your progress and help if you plan to have a second child.

• **Maintain proper form.** Walking heel to toe with your spine straight will reduce the onset of back pain. Keep your arms relaxed at your sides. When walking downhill, try to take a curved path so that you don't bounce around as much.

• **Take baby steps.** After you've given birth, your body is still recovering from nine months of pregnancy. Ease back into your workout routine by only doing what's comfortable. Your body went through numerous changes and it will take time and commitment to get back into your desired shape.

• **Smile.** Working out should be fun so find something active and safe that makes you feel good. Vary your workouts so you don't become bored and add your own personal touch. Make a special workout tape, find a favorite park to walk to or splurge on a pair of quality athletic shoes.

To read Joy's diary and learn more fitness tips, check out www.eraactive.com.