

Tips offered for new mothers

George P. Matysek Jr./CNS

Three weeks before her son was born, Julie Blanton Mooney was still doing step aerobics and occasionally using free weights to keep in shape. So it was no surprise that the energetic first-time mother wanted to get right back into her fitness regimen even as she was recuperating from a Caesarean-section delivery.

But that kind of high-energy workout after delivery of a baby might lead to overexertion and can lead to internal bleeding and exhaustion.

With that in mind, the parishioner of St. Clement I Church in Lansdowne, Md., did the next best thing. In the first few weeks of her recovery, she walked around her house. After a few more weeks, she was

outside walking young Morgan in his stroller. Then, gradually, she began getting some help from her infant himself to get back in shape.

"I would dance with him, lift him up and put him on my legs," said Mooney.

Dr. Pedro P. Arrabal, director of obstetrics at St. Agnes HealthCare in Baltimore, noted that most women won't feel like doing a lot of exercising since the healing process takes a lot of their energy. But if they had a normal delivery, he said, they can begin to go back to their full exercise routines within four to six weeks of their delivery. It may take longer with more complicated births, he added.

If new mothers are breast-feeding, they should increase their calo-

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rie intake by 300 calories and also increase their intake of calcium by drinking extra milk and taking calcium tablets, he said.

"Breast-feeding is not only healthy for the baby, it can provide physical and psychological benefits for the mother.

"It helps the mother's uterus to shrink back to its normal size," said Dr. William R. Hobbs, an obstetrician at Bon Secours Health System in Baltimore.

Hobbs said most women can expect to return to their "normal" body size in about six weeks after delivery, he said.



Karen Callaway/CNS

Moms need a gentle exercise regimen after giving birth, physicians say. High-energy workouts can lead to internal bleeding and exhaustion.

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