

Being a mum brings about many changes – and not all of them welcome! You inevitably put on weight and lose muscle tone; your routine becomes haphazard; and your emotions follow a rollercoaster ride. But running can put back what motherhood takes out of you. It can restore a fit body, healthy mind, high self-esteem and a sense of ‘release’ within your busy family life.

A LIFESAVER

‘Running was my lifesaver,’ says Charlotte Chapman, 37. ‘It helped me lose my baby weight and feel good about myself.’ A mum of three boys (aged 13, ten and two), Charlotte had more to contend with than most mums, when her husband left her just before her youngest son, George, was born. Running wasn’t her idea initially. ‘My brother is a runner and he reckoned the best way to get me up and out was to book me into the Tromsø Midnight Sun Half Marathon!’ she says. This was the motivation Charlotte needed. She bought a three-wheeler buggy and started to run/walk her way around a two-mile loop. Gradually, Charlotte ran more and walked less, and once she could run a complete loop she added distance. At weekends, Charlotte’s older boys cycled as she ran.

BABY JOGGER

If you want to follow Charlotte’s example, you need a decent buggy to withstand the rigours of running. Three-wheelers are essential and those with bigger wheels give baby a smoother ride. A model specially designed for jogging/running gives space for your legs to move behind the buggy. Baby Jogger is one of the original designs and is still highly regarded (www.babyjogger.co.uk).

Running with a baby jogger is hard work, so go easy on yourself at first. The challenge lies in not being able to use your arms to propel yourself forwards. The weight of the jogger and its precious cargo also add resistance. One mum who has perfected the art of running with a baby jogger is primary school teacher Elizabeth (Tizzy) Aalders, 35, mum to 15-month-old Nathaniel. She recommends starting slowly and getting the technique right before attempting speed.

GET BUGGY FIT!

Tizzy caught the running bug when she attended Buggyfit classes (www.buggyfit.co.uk). Buggyfit mums exercise outdoors, and their babies and buggies come too. ‘Buggyfit was the catalyst,’ says Tizzy. ‘Through its guidance, I quickly improved my fitness and the buggy running took off from there.’ In fact, Tizzy is such a good buggy runner, she won the 2010 Tommy’s Baby Race in Windsor Great Park last year. ‘The Baby Races are huge fun, and

Why these mums run

‘Running makes me feel good about myself, and my confidence has helped me be a better person and a better mother’

• *Charlotte*

‘Running reduces stress, makes you feel good and gives you energy, which is just what you need when you have kids’

• *Steph*

‘Buggy running makes you feel fantastic: you’ve done a run and shared outdoor time with your baby – it’s simply lovely’

• *Tizzy*



Being a fit, happy mum will set a great example to your children to enjoy being active

at 5K and 8K they’re a sensible distance to train for,’ she says. To find out about this year’s Baby Races, held on 10, 17 and 25 September, visit www.tommys.org.

INVOLVE YOUR CHILDREN

It’s not unusual to feel guilty if you think your activity is taking you away from your children. So, try to involve your kids in your running where possible. Take young children out on their bikes while you run and encourage older children to run with you. Or choose a park you can loop around while older children play football.

GET YOUR RUN DONE

Take a tip from Tizzy and commit to a run in the morning before the day gets underway. ‘Running at 9am means we’re up and out, my run is done and I’m free to do activities with Nathaniel,’ she says. ‘A morning run sets me up for the day and then I’m more relaxed about doing indoor, baby-related things.’

PITCH UP AT PARKRUN

Parkruns (www.parkrun.com) are a great mum-motivator as they are an accessible 5K and focused on family participation. Parkruns are held across the country every Saturday. Flatter routes on tarmac or well-formed paths – like the Dorney Lake parkrun Tizzy favours – are more conducive to running with a buggy. But if you’re buggy-free, undulating, off-road routes are most enjoyable.

‘DO AS I DO’

The legacy to your children of being a mum who runs is valuable. With child obesity on the rise and the distraction of electronic games, exercise can fall below the radar for youngsters. A fit mum sets a good example: if you have a positive attitude to exercise, your children will absorb that. If you want your kids to run with you, choose your time carefully and encourage them to join you.

Steph, 43, shows how a mum who maintains her own running regime can have a positive effect on her child. She has run for about 22 years and only stopped briefly towards the end of her pregnancy with Jemma, now 14, and shortly after her birth. Jemma has inherited her mother’s love of exercise – they do circuits, cycle rides and parkruns together. ‘It’s great Jemma is active,’ says Steph. ‘We have exercise in common and that’s a great asset between a mum and a teenage daughter.’

Coping with school holidays

DON’T LET SCHOOL HOLIDAYS UPSET YOUR RUNNING ROUTINE – TRY ONE OR MORE OF THESE HOLIDAY HINTS

- Make the most of the long days – run first or last thing, so you can keep daytime commitments.
- Take older children with you – let them run or cycle alongside you.
- Head to a park where your children can play safely while you run loops.
- Keep it short and sweet – speed sessions or hill intervals will work you hard in a short space of time.
- Enter an autumn race – this commitment will keep you focused.
- Sneak out for an early run when you’re away on holiday – you’ll beat the heat of the day and be back before breakfast!



‘TAKE YOUNGER CHILDREN OUT ON THEIR BIKES WHILE YOU RUN ALONGSIDE AND ENCOURAGE OLDER CHILDREN TO RUN WITH YOU’