Taking Care of Your Mommy Body

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Mighty Mammas

Now that you're a mom, life has changed in indefinitely more ways than you can count on fingers and toes. Most specifically, the mantra, "Looking out for number one," now means looking out for your little one: midnight feedings, the best preschool and parent-teacher conferences. But wait. Although attending to your children's needs and wants is important, never forget to take care of yourself. Find out how.

Lose that Mommy Belly

While Halle Berry's post-baby bod may be all over the tabloids, most of us don't want anyone to talk about, let alone see, our midsection. But it's never too late to get rid of your mommy belly. Start out with a before-you-get-fit plan, pinpointing workout time, location and what body areas and muscle groups you want to target. Designating a half hour, four times a week, to weight-training and aerobic exercise may leave you in better shape than ever.

Take a Time Out

A mother's to-do list never ends. Instead of trying to be Wonder Woman, figure out what you can realistically do in one day, and then conquer the absolute essentials first. Many women suffer from "Mother Martyr Syndrome," says Amber Rosenberg, a life coach specializing in working mothers. "Women need to adjust their expectations," she says. Sometimes saying 'no' to chores or others is saying 'yes' to something far more important -- your sanity.

Adjust Your Assets

Larger breasts are a pregnancy perk, but your new assets may need additional support. For the sake of your silhouette and lower back, it's crucial that you visit a dependable intimate apparel store and get fitted for a new bra size every few years. Sure, it can feel as embarrassing as that first fitting -- remember that clerk pulling a tape measure across your chest? -- but that's far preferable to sagging breasts and back pain.
**Make Time for Play Time**

Spending nights cuddling and reading with your kiddies may be your new favorite pastime -- or job -- but it's crucial you sprinkle your social calendar with hours for adult friends and family. "Find a neighbor or ask your husband to watch the kids so you can get outside and meet a friend for a cup of coffee," says personal coach Lori Radun. "Anything that reminds you, I'm still a woman.”

**Dress to Impress**

Between spills, splashes and spitting, kids are messy. Even the most stylish of mothers can fall into the pattern of slipping into sweats too often. Comfortable? Sure. But it can take a toll on your confidence. One trick is to get up a few minutes before the rest of your brood to get ready with a great outfit, quick hair-do and a little make-up. If you can't find the time, swap child care with other moms to slip away in the morning or evening for hair and nail appointments, says Radun.

**Feed Your Inner Artist**

Picking up a book or paint brush may seem like impossibilities when you have children, but maintaining your hobbies is an easy outlet for relaxation. "Give yourself permission to add self care to your life," said Rosenberg, "Any act of nurturing; anything that enhances health, wealth, or physical, mental, social, or spiritual fulfillment." If your mental health is in top shape, you won't be the only benefactor. Your contentment will allow you to care better for your family as well.

**Keep the Sexual Spark Alive**

Remember that charming, handsome guy you married? Yes, the one sleeping in bed next to you. Don't forget him. It's easy to let the kids, work and routine extinguish life in the bedroom, but that's a surefire road to the two D's; depression and divorce. Communication is key, says Rosenberg. Share your sexual desires and expectations about lovemaking. Most importantly, practice, practice, practice.

**No More Baby Bites**

If junior isn't clearing his or her plate at every meal, you may be tempted to dig in on the leftovers. It's only a taste, right? Wrong. These little bits of food add up quickly and pack pounds. Build a daily meal plan, says Rosenberg. "It will be less tempting to eat the leftovers on your baby's plate." It's a win-win if you focus on what's going into your mouth a fraction as much as you focus on your child's.

**Add Variety to Family Dinners**

It can be challenging to get your children to eat anything other than mac-and-cheese or hot dogs. But it's not just possible, it's essential for all of you to have some variety in your
the menu. Introduce new vegetables or meats by giving them kid-friendly shapes or names. The sooner you serve your child "grown-up" foods like sushi or quiche, the easier it is for you to eat like the grown-up you are. Besides, what are you going to feed your adult guests? Chicken fingers?

Go to Bed

You may be taking a break from work to stay home with the kids, but your time is anything but relaxing. "It's okay to let the housework go so you can take a nap," says Radun. "Our frame of mind is so much better when we get adequate sleep." The dishes may be piled in the sink a bit longer, but after some zzz's, you'll have more energy to clean them, then the kitchen, the house, and so on.