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DVD helps mothers work out with babies

I can't get a babysitter every time I want to work out. I don't belong to a gym with child care. My gym does have a child care room, but I don't want to put my baby in there. If I exercise at home during my child's nap, I don't get anything else done. I work all day so I don't want to leave my baby to go exercise at night or on the weekends.

All of these are common and plausible reasons why new moms can't get into a regular workout program. But now there's a new exercise DVD developed by a St. Petersburg mom that blows all of those excuses out of the water.

The Exercise With Mommy DVD series offers a workout in which moms hold their babies against their chest while they side step or do squats. There are also times when the babies lie on a quilt and the screen splits to show exercises on one side and bright flower, rainbow or star graphics dancing about the screen on the other.

It's a combination of Jane Fonda and Baby Einstein.

"You don't need a babysitter. You don't need a sleeping baby, and you don't have to go to the gym," said Amy Burton, who hopes her name will also go down in video history.

The certified personal trainer and mom of a 5-year-old son has been selling one DVD on her Web site for \$19.99 since October and has another one coming out soon.

I viewed the video and think it is a very doable workout for new moms with a baby in tow. But it's not so easy that you won't see results.

I speak from experience. After my first child was born, I took a free mom-and-baby workout class offered twice a week for a year at the hospital where I gave birth. Considering I couldn't even unload the dishwasher or take a shower without my baby crying her head off, I didn't think she would make it through a workout. But she did. She fussed for five minutes here and there, but most of the time she loved it.

I loved it too because it was time I was doing something for myself and having fun with my daughter. Health experts have long praised the benefits of regular exercise for physical as well as mental health. And right after you have a baby, exercise does plenty to boost your energy level even when you're getting so little sleep.

Burton said she consulted pediatricians, obstetricians, physical



KATHERINE SNOW SMITH
ROOKIE MOM

and babies as she developed the series.

Her first DVD, *Back in Shape with Baby*, is for mothers with babies 6 weeks to 6 months old and includes three workouts that last 10 minutes, 15 minutes and 20 minutes. She has designed the workout so that mom is never out of baby's sight; the longest the baby is lying on the quilt at her feet is about two minutes.

"About the time they might start fussing you change positions," Burton said. "It's all about working with the child. When they get tired on one thing, you go on to the next so mom can get through the workout."

In the DVD, Burton exercises with her friend's 6-month-old daughter Reilly, who never cries but scoots off the blanket a couple of times. Mostly she looks content while Burton holds her in an upright position against her chest, making sure the head, neck and back are supported, while she side steps and does squats. (Even colicky babies usually cooperate because of all the rocking and cuddling.) Along with reminding moms to hold their stomach muscles in and shoulders back Burton tells them when to switch the arm that's supporting the weight of the baby.

"It's like having anywhere from a 7- to a 20-pound weight," Burton said.

And that extra weight makes the exercises that much more effective. When the mom lies down on the floor to do sit-ups or leg lifts, the baby rests on her stomach. And the screen always has moving stars, dancing teddy bears or spinning flowers for the baby to watch whether in mom's arms or on the quilt.

"The graphics for the younger babies are really simple so they don't get overstimulated. And the music is tailored not to be annoying to mothers but also pleasing to children," Burton said, laughing.

New moms should try the workouts a few times without their babies to make sure they feel comfortable enough to take on the extra weight and responsibility of

should start with the shorter workouts then work up to the 20-minute one.

"If a new mom sticks to it and does it about every day, yes, she will lose pounds," Burton said. "But it is more about toning and getting strength back in the core, that stomach and back."

She also suggests adding aerobic activity, such as a fast walk or run, at least three times a week.

Doing the exercises regularly may also make your baby more agreeable during the workout. When Burton was practicing with Reilly before taping the workout, they tried it several times a week. Before long, the baby seemed to know what was coming as soon as Burton showed up.

"Moms just need to keep it up and establish it early," she said. Don't pick your baby up the second she fusses during the first or second workout and decide it's not going to work. Give her a chance to get used to it.

Each video in her series will progress in terms of the mother's workout and the child's graphics. The next video Burton will release is the last in the series and is designed for moms of 4- and 5-year-olds. It has heavy aerobic exercises and graphics and music teaching letters, days of the week and months of the year.

Along with helping moms get and stay in shape, Burton sees the workout series as a way to get children into exercise.

"Part of the concept is it helps offset the growing problem of obesity in children," she said. "They learn from an early age if they exercise with their mom and their family on a routine basis, it's fun, it's time with their mom and it teaches them this is something they need to do for the rest of their life."

If sales of the first and last DVD go well, Burton envisions making four more for moms of children between the age of 6 months and 4 years. By the third video, when the children are a year old, they will have little exercises to do alongside their mother. Not serious aerobics, just fun movements.

"It's been a much larger project than I ever imagined," she said. "I probably started planning about 2½ years ago."

For more information, click on www.exercisewithmommy.com or call 1-877-88-MOMMY.

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