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Postbaby Waist Training: What You Need to Know

Corsets and other waist trainers may be on trend, but are they on target? We asked the experts if you can corset your way back to your pre-baby bod.

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There's a lot of training that happens once you have a baby. Sleep training and potty training come to mind, of course -- but what about waist training? Today, a growing number of new moms are attempting to smooch their postbaby mummy tummies into oblivion with the help of a 16th-century throwback -- the corset -- and its modern-day equivalent, the belly wrap. While modern-day Spanx may be the go-to choice for the fake-it-till-you-make-it crowd, waist trainers like corsets and wraps are all about squeezing-it-till-it-stays. But is it safe -- and does it work?

- [Check out our 'lose the baby weight' guide!](#)

What is Waist Training?

"Waist training is the act of tightly wrapping your midsection -- from the bottom of your ribs to your lower waist -- with a corset or supportive band to gradually reduce your natural waist," says Sherry Ross, M.D., an ob-gyn and women's health specialist at Providence Saint John's Health Center in Santa Monica, California. "Most claim that tightening the waist trainer promotes thermal activity and perspiration that triggers fat loss. The process allegedly also causes reshaping and slimming."

Quite a few headline-grabbing mamas, like Kim Kardashian, Kim Zolciak, Jessica Alba, Ciara, Brooke Burke-Charvet, and JWoww and Snooki from *The Jersey Shore*, would poo-poo Dr. Ross' "allegedly," and claim that waist cinching helped bring their bodies back to their before-baby glory. (Burke-Charvet even sells her own line of waist trainers now.)

Non-celebrity moms turn to cinching, too. Sheelagh Adshead, a New York City mother of three, started wrapping her middle after her third child was born. "I was a little hesitant to try it out. I was concerned about not being able to breathe, but the postnatal fitness program I was following recommended it so I gave it a shot -- and I don't regret it," she says. At first, Adshead wore her corset only during light postbaby workouts. But after a few weeks, she started to wear it all day. (Some waist-cinching brands recommend wearing the product for eight to ten hours a day.) "It was flattering, fairly comfortable, and it was helping me trim my middle," she says. Adshead packed her corset up after eight weeks and was pleased with the slimming results.

- [Not interested in waist trainers? Shop Spanx!](#)

Does Waist Training Really Work?

First, let's take a look at the postbirth biology: "With all the fluid and hormonal shifts that take place during [pregnancy](#), the amount of water retention after [birth](#) can be intense, uncomfortable, and a bit shocking," says Dr. Ross. "For many, this postbirth water retention is worse during that first week after delivery than during the pregnancy." It takes about two weeks for the abrupt retention to dissipate, and about another two weeks for the remainder to fade. Meanwhile, a new mom is still waiting for her uterus to shrink from the size of a watermelon to the size of pear, which can take up to six weeks, says Dr. Ross. So all of this fluid loss and belly-shrinkage naturally occurs whether you're wearing a corset or not. "Waist trainers and belly wraps often claim that they can help relieve water retention and shrink the uterus faster, but this is in no way medically proven," says Dr. Ross. In fact, there have been no studies showing that corsets help with weight loss.

Think of it this way: "Pretend your middle is a soft but full balloon and you tie a string around it. What happens?" asks Holly Perkins, a certified strength and conditioning specialist and author of *Lift to Get Lean*. "The air gets displaced and moves to the outer edges of the balloon. That's what happens when you use a waist cincher. You displace water, even organs and soft tissue. You do not change fat composition or deposit."

Should You Try Waist Training?

If you're simply aiming for a temporary slimming effect, go for it. "Corsets are ideal for a night out on the town," says Dr. Ross. "It'll definitely support a saggy belly and give you mental and physical confidence to wear that picture-perfect dress." But if a new mom wants to wear a totally optional postpartum undergarment, Dr. Ross would much rather she sport compression shorts. "Graduated compression shorts can play an important role in adding support to the pelvis, hips, and thighs immediately postpartum -- and help with lymphatic flow," notes Marianne Ryan, a physical therapist in New York City, who often recommends compression shorts to her postpartum clients. Plus, notes Dr. Ross, "the physical and emotional effects of supporting this traumatized area of the body help in the healing process."

Bottom Line

"I really liked wearing the corset," says Adshead. "But I realize it wasn't a quick fix. I made adjustments to my diet and I followed a workout plan as well. I look at the corset as something that made me feel more confident and made my clothes fit better."

Postpartum Exercise: Tips For New Moms



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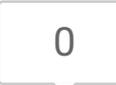
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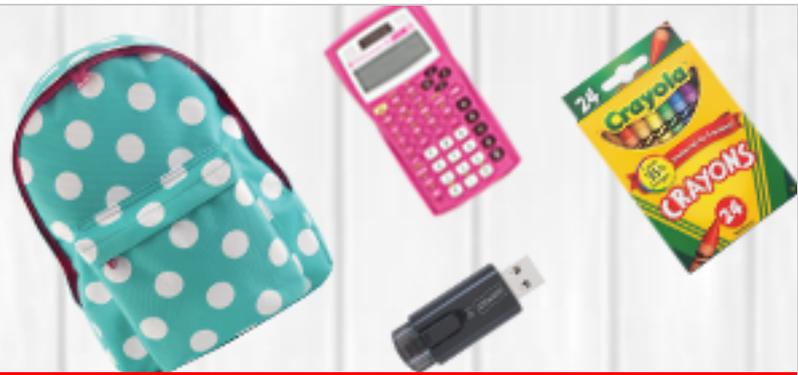
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