

LEARN HOW TO TRAIN FEMALE CORE REGIONS SAFELY



# MUMS RETURNING TO EXERCISE NEED TO EXERCISE DIFFERENTLY

WITH KRISTYN CAMPBELL

INDUSTRY INSIDER | #007

EXPRO

## KRISTYN CAMPBELL



"Hi, I'm Kirstyn Campbell from KC Fit, an award-winning women's health trainer from New Zealand. I have been specialising in women's health through rehabilitation and exercise for 5 years, both in person and online.

I am passionate about educating both mum's and trainers on how to take care of the female body through exercise, helping it to get stronger and function better for life.

I have designed several online Pelvic Floor and Deep Core programs and workshops, including my newly released accredited course for Fitness Professionals.

I am excited to be sharing my knowledge via this article and can't wait to arm you with the knowledge and skills to help repair and strengthen your client's core post childbirth and beyond via our online training course too."



## WHY THE 6-WEEK CHECK ISN'T ENOUGH

The 6-week postnatal check-up is an opportunity for the new mum to discuss how she is feeling both physically and mentally and hopefully receive clearance to return to safe exercise. What this check-up looks like can vary and it's sadly very under-covered in Singapore.

To return to exercise several checks are required ideally including how bowel movements are going, checking mum is coping with potential postnatal depression, if present how ab separation is progressing, how the body is recovering from the stitches (c-section or vaginal), check the uterus is moving back into place and will teach/practise pelvic floor activation. Sadly feedback from mum's is that majority of obstetricians aren't covering these vital areas.

“Although 33% of births in Singapore are c-section (major surgery cutting have way down into the stomach) and it's extremely routine to have an episiotomy pushed on you (cut from vagina to rectum), the 6-week check is usually checking the scar, doing a pap test, checking the uterus is recovering and a birth control question. They are then told they can return to exercise with no attention given to the pelvic floor muscles or mum's mental health, and pelvic floor physiotherapists aren't very common.”

Unfortunately, this is where risks occur because very few trainers understand the impact of pregnancy and childbirth on the mum, and even fewer know how to train postnatal mums safely and effectively.

This is where the importance of properly educated trainers is needed. When training postnatal mums qualified trainers should ask questions such as:

- Type of birth (vaginal or c-section)
- What degree of tearing (stitches)?
- How was the recovery process?
- Weight of the baby
- How long was the labour?
- Any leaking, pain, or discomfort?
- Exercise history

A qualified postnatal trainer should also check for abdominal separation, measuring length, width and depth, along with teaching pelvic floor and transverse abdominal activation through breathing.

Recommending that the new mum visits a Women's Health Physio (WHP) is a key part of returning to exercise. At Sub30 Core Restore we highly recommend trainers to build a relationship with a local WHP and work alongside them to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all postnatal mums.



# HOW CHILDBIRTH INJURIES CAN IMPACT A MUM RETURNING TO EXERCISE:

Many mums who sustain injuries during childbirth don't seek help from medical professionals and view their issues as part of motherhood. They live with pain, discomfort and reduced quality of life not knowing that these injuries can be improved greatly if not totally repaired.

The injuries that can occur during childbirth include:

1. Prolapse (lowering of the bowel, bladder and/or uterus)
2. Incontinence (uncontrollable bladder and/or bowel)
1. Lower and/or Upper Back Soreness, 80% of lower back pain is linked with weak deep core muscles
2. Diastasis recti (ab separation), causing doming and pain
3. Hip/Pelvis/Knee Pain
4. Internal and/or external Tearing/Grazing
5. C-Section
6. Dislocated or broken coccyx/ tailbone

All of the above are childbirth related issues that can be corrected by getting the correct advice and support. If left unidentified they can put the mum at higher risk of injury and further complications all of which are preventable if correct precautions and considerations are taken when exercising.

The trainer can aid this by being informed of such injuries, knowing how to make necessary interventions and alternatives to their programming and by ensuring the mum follows a progressive and personalised program, accounting for their unique contraindications.

## **WHAT FACTORS IMPACT THE READINESS OF A WOMAN TO RETURN TO HIGH IMPACT ACTIVITIES LIKE RUNNING?**

Even when new mums are ready to return to exercise, the journey needs to be progressive with consideration given to when to return to any level or type of high intensity exercise. This is because the pelvic floor muscles need time to recover from the added weight carried during pregnancy and the deep core muscles need to restabilise/improve their integrity.



During pregnancy the pelvis area also widens to allow space to carry a growing baby and aids in the childbirth process, meaning pelvic bones and ligaments need time to repair, to restabilise/sit back in a snug position and solidify the pelvis area. During pregnancy a growing baby also pushes internal organs up into the ribcage, these organs need time to return to their original position.

Therefore, it is important for a PT to be mindful that even if a mum feels ready, it's ideal to wait 3–6 months (sometimes 9 months) postpartum before returning to any amount of running or high intensity exercise.

During this time the PT's role should focus on helping the mum to strengthen and stabilise her pelvis, hips and glutes prior to any running or jumping exercises. There are several exercises to be done even from the early postnatal stage to rebuild strong foundations, progress, strengthen and prepare for running and high intensity.



## TOP TIP FOR OUR EXERCISE PROFESSIONALS

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*Education is key!  
We strongly recommend all trainers undertake upskilling in the areas of pregnancy, postnatal and pelvic floor training.*

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Particularly in countries where the postnatal health care is lacking, as the trainer/coach can play a crucial role in a smooth and appropriate safe return to exercise.

Pregnancy, childbirth and hormones are areas that greatly impact the female body. Informed trainers can assist in educating mums to better understand their body and help them on the road to recovery. Qualified trainers understand how to help each individual mum get strong, functional, fit and healthy while listening to her body throughout the recovery process. Trainers can only train mum's to be stronger, when they understand how!

Becoming qualified in this area will set one apart from other trainers within their local area. It's amazing that the knowledge and education a trainer needs to train mums isn't taught in fitness academies or institutions. This is essential knowledge one needs to know, to enhance both their credentials and business outlook.



# HOW DO SUB30 CORE RESTORE WORKOUTS HELP?

The Sub30 Core Restore workouts are programmed sessions trainers can use when working with new mums to help to improve lower back pain, reduce abdominal separation, strengthen weak/absent core and improve pelvic floor dysfunction by strengthening weak pelvic floor muscles. The workouts teach connection with the deep core muscles through the breathing process.

Sub30 Core Restore are entry level deep core workouts that help give a balanced exercise program for females of any age or stage of the postnatal journey. Once you're postnatal, you're postnatal for life. We recommend deep core exercises every week as part of a regular training program, to have balance for the whole body amongst the strength, cardio and stretch aspects.

The Sub30 Core Restore workouts help trainers teach how to repair and strengthen the body after pregnancy and childbirth, as well as preventing injuries with a strong functioning deep core. The workouts are in audio format with voiceover commands, music and timings. Each workout has video demonstrations on each individual exercise to ensure proper form and technique as well as giving hints, tips, and cues.

*As education is key when training a postnatal mum effectively – health and fitness professionals must complete our online Pre, Postnatal and Core Restore workshop, becoming certified in understanding how to effectively run our postnatal core workouts. Learn more and save \$50 off the training online here <https://exprofitfitness.com/courses/level-1-pre-postnatal-workshop/>*



A woman with her hair in a ponytail, wearing a white sports bra and black shorts, is in a low squat position in a gym. She is holding a black kettlebell with both hands. The gym has large windows in the background and a brick wall on the right. The floor is made of dark, circular-patterned tiles.

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