

time to run for busy mums

When Liz Yelling finished the Beijing Olympic Marathon she crossed the line in pain. Not from pushing herself really hard in the race but from hitting the tarmac at around mile 10 and running the remaining 16 miles with bumps, bruises and a fractured rib. "I got tripped and hit the road hard," says Liz. "It was tough to continue but nothing was going to stop me from finishing. I'd arrived at the Olympics in the best shape of my life so it was really disappointed at getting tripped up after pretty much leading the race for the first 10 miles". >>





New way of life

Since the Olympics life is about much more for this marathon runner. After an enforced break to recover she's now jogging not just the miles but also life as a new Mum to baby daughter Ruby. "I've always wanted to be a Mum," said Commonwealth Bronze medallist Liz. "After Beijing my husband and I decided that we'd like to start a family". Ruby Rose Yelling was born in June 2009 and since then Liz has been finding ways to integrate her running into her job and motherhood.

"I really wanted to enjoy my pregnancy and be active" said Liz, "(During pregnancy) I ran an easy pace five times a week up to 20-weeks then I was diagnosed with placenta previa, which meant I was not able to run during the second half of my pregnancy. After giving birth and recovered I had not run a step in eight-months. I was very unfit when I started back".

The road back to fitness for Liz was a steady one. "I didn't want to rush it," she says. "I have so many other

things now to do in my day, my life isn't just running anymore and it's no longer my running that is the most important thing. I want to learn to be good Mum and in the first few months that meant my running needed to take a back seat for a while. I needed time to find ways to fit running into a new and very different way of life!"

Getting back into it

"When Ruby was born I had two weeks of complete rest. I really needed it! The birth was a bit of a marathon effort in itself. I'd have gone totally stir crazy staying in the house so I took the occasional light walk (or hobble as Mums will understand!) with the pushchair. I then did two weeks gradually building up the time spent walking. This helped me to start putting time aside for exercise and gave me some time on my own. I'd nip out of the house for a few minutes whilst Ruby was asleep and leave my husband to look after her. I then introduced two weeks of jog/walking every other day. To start with I certainly did much more walking than jogging. I wouldn't really call it running as much as shuffling!

Building up slowly

Although Liz is an elite marathon runner she also knew that she'd need to take her time to gradually rebuild her fitness. Even for Olympic runners it takes time to find their feet again. Liz started her return to fitness with some steady running and progressed the duration a week at a time over many months. "It was a little bit like going back to basics and building up for my first 5k" she says. "I needed to spend some time on my feet first and then focus on building up the frequency, the volume and then the intensity of my running"

Liz started by looking for time slots in the day when she could find the time to snatch a run. As Ruby grew during the first six to eight months this time was easier to find. "I was able to build a bit of routine. Once I'd stopped breast-feeding and Ruby became more independent it was easier to find the time to build my running up. I gradually

built up to running six times a week in the first nine months. I really didn't want to hurry it. I felt it was better to get the return to fitness right and be patient than try to rush it all in the short term and for things to go wrong down the line. I really want to be able to compete again in great events like the Virgin London Marathon and hopefully my 3rd Olympic Games in London in 2012.

Fitting it all in

The majority of women lead busy hectic work, family and life schedules and sometimes it seems impossible to be able to fit anything else into a 24hr day. Creating a balanced everyday pattern and fitting everything in isn't always straightforward or easy. Although it might seem like adding going for a run into an already overbooked day is just asking too much, once you make the choice, once you make the time to run, you'll be pleased you did. >>





Liz's top tips for finding the time to run

- Remember that time made for yourself to do what you enjoy is still productive time. Don't feel guilty about going for a run. Taking time out will not only benefit you, but also your family and work.
- Create balance in your life by acknowledging the things that are important to you, making choices and prioritizing how you live your life. Balance the things you have to do with the things you want to do.
- Create boundaries and limits for how you use your time in the day and stick to them.
- Develop a support network: join a running club, get a running 'buddy', get your partner and children 'on board' with your love for being active.
- Be organised. Be creative and clever about how you arrange your daily schedule. Keep a calendar visible to your whole family so everyone can see what's going on.
- Make priorities for your time. Decide what is truly important to you and spend quality time doing it.
- Spend less time on tasks that are not priorities and more time on those that are.
- Find reliable child care that you trust; partners, friends, agencies.
- Don't forget to be flexible; when things don't go totally to plan don't over worry. Adjust and move on. Forgive yourself when things don't get done.
- Run early: try running first thing in the morning before you do anything else – it gets you up, raises your metabolic rate and gets you ready for the day.
- Run straight after work – before you get interrupted by things at home (the TV, children etc) go immediately out for a run. Run directly from work or stop on the way home for your run. This will invigorate and refresh you.
- Don't procrastinate about your run – just head out and do it.
- Keep all your running kit (not your trainers!) in the same cupboard or drawer so you know exactly where to find it and if you run early get your kit out the night before so it's ready to wear.

Liz tops tips on returning to fitness

- **Take your time**
Start with some walk-running and run how you feel. Starting with a nice slow pace and just think about running for more time rather than running faster. Be very patient.
- **Consistency is key**
Getting out the door regularly (3-5 times per week) even if it is just for 15mins helps you to establish a routine for your running. Regular running means you are more likely to see improvements in your fitness.
- **Be flexible and adaptable**
As a mum you will encounter many barriers to your running making it easy to not run. Go with the flow and be creative about finding opportunities to run.
- **Leave healthy snacks to hand**
Being a mum means you are often rushed off your feet and feeling hungry. Sweets and chocolate are quick fixes. Buy plenty of fruit to eat instead; seeds, raw nuts, cereal bars and the occasional treat so you can grab and go!
- **Everyone is different**
Every woman has a different pregnancy journey and it's really important to do what you feel is right for you. Don't follow what someone else did. Trial and retriail until you find what works.

12 months later and with a one year old toddling around the house Liz is right back into the swing of her training. "It's not easy fitting in work, family, an energetic one year old and trying to train twice a day. Days have to be logistically planned but my running is important to me so as a family we make it work. Sometimes it means running early the morning or later at night when Ruby is in bed but if I want to make the return to elite level racing I need to make the time to run. I also find I actually really love to go out and run. It reminds me of 'me' and is great for some time to myself". See more about Liz and find out how her return to racing goes at www.lizyelling.com

