

## **Post-Natal Loose Skin...is it Possible to Tighten?**

### **Q & A with Mike Pellegrini – Team Trainwithmike**

**Q:** What is the best way, in terms of being quick but cheap, to tighten a midsection? I just had a set of twins, so I don't have too much free time on my hands or tons of money for high priced food, etc. but I would like to tighten my midsection ASAP. I don't gain weight from eating but tightening and losing the last couple pounds (mainly tightening) is what I am having the problems with. I hope to hear from you soon and thanks so much.

**A:** Unfortunately those two words, “quick” and “cheap”, rarely fit into the equation when it comes to changing your body. By the wording of your question, I am assuming your concern is with the excess of stretched loose skin due to the pregnancy. If this is the case, then the answer to this question also applies to anyone who has lost a substantial amount of weight and is left with an excess of loose skin.

Our skin is a living entity that is continuously shedding and reproducing itself. Skin is also elastic and has the potential, with time, to regain its original shape. There are some uncontrollable variables like age, genetics and pre-natal health, which will affect your chances of achieving your goal. But remember spot training does not work (refer to the Q&A article, “spot training myth”). Meaning you can't crunch your way into having tighter skin in your mid-section.

The answer is found in a more holistic approach (isn't that always the case!). The combination of exercise, nutrition and adequate rest and recuperation is how your skin will have the greatest opportunity to regain its original form.

#### **Exercise**

Perform a balanced routine, which includes resistance exercises (weight training), cardio (e.g. speed walking), and stretching. Considering that you just gave birth (twins on top of it), the weight training program should be comprised of postural and core strengthening exercises. Focus specifically on stabilizing and strengthening the pelvis and hip, and on all of the abdominal wall (not just crunches and leg raises!). Be careful not to stretch too hard or deep. You are more susceptible to muscle and connective tissue tears during and after pregnancy. This is due to your body's heightened level of relaxin, a hormone naturally released to loosen joints to facilitate giving birth.

#### **Nutrition**

Once again balance is the key to success here. Consume whole foods including whole grains (e.g. brown rice), lean sources of protein (e.g. chicken breast), fresh dense vegetables (e.g. broccoli) and moderated amounts of fresh fruit. Also be sure to intake

daily some omega 3 fatty acids, preferably sourced from pharmaceutical grade fish oil. Water should be your only beverage and you need to be consuming a minimum of 2 liters a day.

### **Rest & Recuperation**

Easier said than done, I know...I also have a 17 month old and another one the way. But, we need to be getting to bed as early as possible and sleeping our 8 hours in order to achieve success here. If possible take naps when the babies nap and try to get some alone time once a day to do something relaxing for you (i.e. read for 20 min.).

Short of surgery (which is a cop out - in most cases), this is what needs to be done to get rid of that loose skin. It is not complicated, but like anything that is worth it, it takes time, discipline and motivation. Keep in mind there are no guarantees to how much your skin will tighten back. But you know what, if you take this advice, you will be on your way to a healthier lifestyle, which has ample rewards!

### **FIT-TIP**

Remember that the best way to assure maximum recovery of the body after birth is to stay active before and during your pregnancy. As opposed to popular belief, women can continue performing resistance and cardio exercise during their pregnancy. Here are some general guidelines to follow:

- Use lighter weights than you normally do
- Avoid exercises that require you to lie on your back
- Avoid direct abdominal movements (e.g. crunches and leg raises)
- Drink lots of water (min.1 liter/hour of exercise)
- Do not train to exhaustion
- Avoid raising your body core temperature too high
- Most important...listen to your body!

### **FIT-RECIPE**

Recipe provided by Santemobile:

#### **Chicken and Lemon Skewers**

\*\*\*Serve with Whole wheat couscous and salad

Very Easy Recipe for New Mom's on the go!

4 skinless boneless chicken breast portions

1 tsp ground coriander  
2 tsp lemon juice  
1 ¼ cup fat free plain yogurt  
1 lemon  
2 tbsp chopped fresh cilantro  
Olive oil for brushing  
Salt and pepper  
Fresh cilantro sprigs to garnish

1. Cut chicken into 1 inch pieces and place them into a non metallic bowl or dish
2. Add ground coriander, lemon juice and 4 tablespoons of yogurt to the chicken. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Mix and cover with plastic and set aside in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours to marinate.
3. Lemon Yogurt Dip: Put remaining yogurt into a bowl. Peel and finely chop the lemon into the yogurt with the chopped fresh cilantro. Cover with plastic and chill in fridge.
4. Thread the chicken pieces onto skewers. Brush the BBQ rack with oil and cook the chicken over medium high heat for about 15 mins.
5. Transfer the chicken kabobs to plates and serve with yogurt, salad and whole-wheat couscous.