



The MAMMI Study

Women's voices: Returning to exercise: Moira's Story

After the birth of my first baby, I started walking pretty much straight away. I wasn't going too far or too fast at the outset but I definitely felt that it helped me recover physically from the birth, and before long I was going for a good long walk every day. It was a lovely summer, really nice weather. It was great to get out of the house and enjoy a good long walk every day. My daughter normally slept in the buggy while we were out. It made the day feel shorter, to get out and about. And it was just really nice; it felt healthy getting fresh air.

But, that was as far as I went, I didn't actually go back to any exercise classes, like I would have done before I got pregnant with my daughter, simply because I didn't really want to leave her. I didn't feel happy leaving her to go to an exercise class in the evening time at that stage, so I just enjoyed the evenings with my husband and my daughter together, and during the day I made sure I got a good long walk in; really enjoyed it, made me feel healthy, and definitely, just the benefit of getting out of the house was fantastic.

When I had my second baby, my daughter at that stage was 20 months old. I suppose, having a daughter that age and having a newborn baby, it felt kind of niggly in my back so, I didn't really have backache, but I certainly felt some kind of tension in my back. So, I started off walking again, and really enjoyed that.

But, by the time he was 4 months old, I looked, I found a Pilates class that was quite near me, and I went to that, and I really enjoyed it. I felt that that made me much stronger, I didn't have any of those niggles in my back. I felt really fit, felt great, enjoyed the hour away once a week to go to that class as well. My husband was normally pushing a buggy around the house when I came back, in order to keep the baby happy but that worked out perfect for us, it was great, I really enjoyed it.

The social side of going to a class obviously is fantastic, you meet other people and just get out and about, was lovely. When my son then was about 9 months old, I actually started running. I decided that I wanted to see if I would enjoy running. I had never done it before but I just decided that I would see if I would enjoy jogging.

So, I started the 'Couch to 5K' programme. Now, from walking a lot and from doing Pilates, it wasn't really starting from 'Couch', so I went through the start of it much quicker than the plan but I really enjoyed it.



Before long, I was jogging with two kids in a double buggy and really enjoyed it. Again, was never really jogging very far or very fast but I enjoyed getting out for half an hour, maybe three times a week.

And I kept that up when I returned to work, so I'd go out on my lunch break which was fantastic, it was a great way to get some exercise in without losing time with the kids in the evening after getting home from work.

So I really enjoyed that actually, getting out maybe twice a week on my lunchbreak for just 25 minutes, half an hour, and then I'd go jogging maybe once at the weekend then as well. It was lovely, really enjoyed that. That was probably the stage when I felt just so fit and so healthy in everything, it was brilliant.

By the time I had my third baby, in 2018, things had changed a lot in that there was a huge amount on offer for mothers with their babies, so there was a lot of 'Mum and baby' exercise classes, and there was one quite near me, so I went to that twice a week. Really enjoyed it, the benefit of that sort of a class is that you're meeting lots of other mums with small babies, you can do it from 6 or 8 weeks once you feel physically ok and once there are no issues, and your doctor's ok with you returning to exercise and it's really geared towards postpartum women, so all the exercises are very suitable to do, it builds you up gradually.

Again, after having a baby, really helps with the physical recovery, and the social side of that class was just fantastic. And that was twice a week, I really, really enjoyed that. For me, it's all about finding what suits, so at different stages, different things have suited me. You know, there was a time when I didn't want to leave my children and there was another stage where it was fine to leave them. So I mean, for me, it was really about finding what exercise fitted it in at that time.

But having something that you do regularly, for me anyway, definitely, made me feel physically stronger, made me feel healthier, happier, just it's phenomenal, the benefits that you get from it.