

# How to be A YES MUM

Once baby arrives, your life will change forever. But it is still possible to enjoy the things you loved to do pre-bub. Here's how...



Everyone tells you that once you have a new baby, nothing will ever be the same – and it's true. But it's also important to carve out some much-needed 'me-time' into your days, weeks and months. It not only gives you a breather and helps you to feel like your old self, but it also benefits your family, because you'll feel refreshed and ready to tackle all the roles modern mums need to fulfil.

"Often new mums become totally immersed in the baby and neglect themselves," says Renee Mill, a psychologist and author of *Parenting Without Anger* (Ventura Press, \$29.99). "It is very important for our mental and physical wellbeing that we have balance in our lives and meet our spiritual, cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs every week."

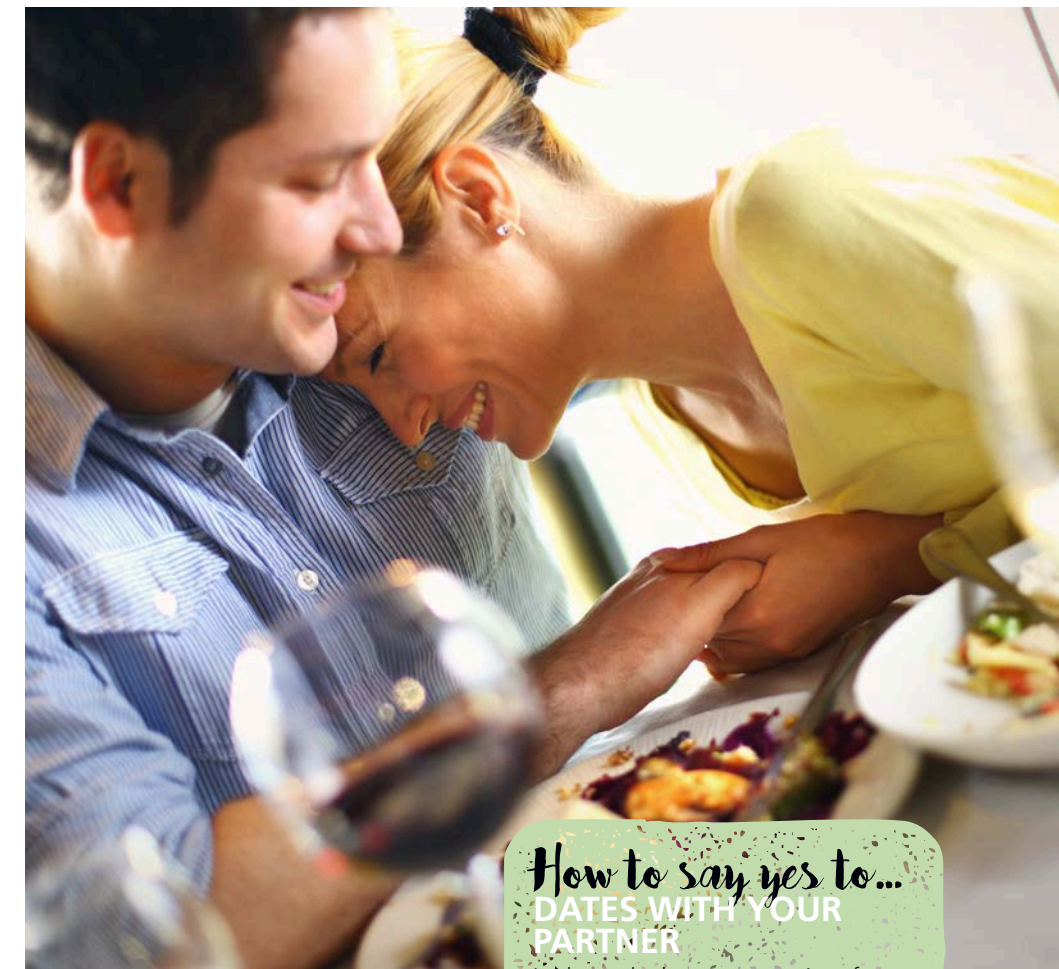
When you have a very young baby, it's tricky to take long periods away from her, but rest assured as she gets older you'll be able to leave her with your partner or a trusted family member or friend so you can get out and about. "The amount of time we can dedicate to each of our needs may change owing to life circumstances at the time, so after a baby we will have reduced time but, nonetheless, some time must be given. When we keep some balance, we are replenished and will be better mothers, too," Renee says.

The best way to ensure you get some time for yourself is to be organised. "At the start of every week, write down a weekly plan where you make sure you will meet at least one friend for coffee, have three walks or take three yoga classes, watch a documentary or take an hour to read, for example" she says. "Once all your needs have been slotted in, you can ask for the help you need to make sure it happens. New mums should not be shy in asking family members for help or even paying for help." Here are some more tips to help you say yes to all the things that you love to do...

## How to say yes to... WORKING OUT

If you enjoyed exercising pre-baby, there's no reason why you can't keep up your workouts once baby has arrived. "It's easy for new mums to feel down and exercise is a great mood-booster," Renee says.

"It also helps with recovery after the birth



## How to say yes to... DATES WITH YOUR PARTNER

In the early days – or years! – of parenthood it can be easy to neglect your partner, but your relationship will benefit greatly from a regular date night – or even a quick coffee at your favourite cafe.

Swap babysitting duties with a close friend or relative who has children of a similar age. Go at a time that works for everyone, whether it's a brekkie date, lunch or trip to the movies. The aim is to get out of the house together, hold hands and talk uninterrupted.

and helps you feel good, positive and energetic. When mum feels good, the baby will feel it and will thrive."

In the early days, go for a stroll around the block before your partner leaves for work in the morning, or after he comes home in the evening. If visitors call in during the day, ask them to give baby a cuddle while you pop to the local cafe for a takeaway cappuccino. Even if it's a 10- or 15-minute break, it's time outside in the fresh air when you can be alone and clear your head. If you love going to the gym, choose one that has an on-site crèche, or go on the weekend when your partner is home and can be on baby duty.

## How to say yes to... DINNER WITH FRIENDS

When your bub is very little, you can enjoy an early dinner at a restaurant, and if the timing is right your baby should nap through it all. The first three months of baby's life are the best time to do this as newborns sleep a lot and are usually happy as long as you're close by.

When your baby is older, or during the toddler stages, eating out becomes trickier. Go out early before restaurants get busy, check the menu online before you leave and order as soon as you arrive, and if bub kicks off, take turns taking her outside while the other parent eats.

Alternatively, invite friends for dinner after bub goes down for the night to give you an hour or two of adult time. And remember, training your kids to eat out from an early age means you can enjoy family meals at restaurants down the track.





## How to say yes to... A GIRLS' NIGHT OUT

Every mum needs a regular girls' night out to connect with friends and have some fun. Plan to go out early, perhaps after baby's last feed before bedtime. If you're breastfeeding, ensure you express enough milk so your partner or a carer can feed her while you're out. Try to pick a venue close to home so you can dash back if you have to.

The best part? You'll come home to (hopefully) a sleeping baby. And don't feel guilty – it is healthy for your child to get used to being cared for by someone other than you. "It's good for mothers to ask for outside help," says Sara Zaske, author of *Achtung Baby* (Hachette, \$32.99). "Not just for their own sanity, but for the sake of their children. [Babies] need more than what one person can possibly give them."

## How to say yes to... VISITING A GALLERY

Going to art exhibitions is food for the soul, and you don't have to stop once baby arrives. Wide spaces, cool rooms, plenty of seats and colourful art mean both you and bub will feel calm and relaxed. Many galleries and museums

are family-friendly, with the MCA in Sydney offering baby-changing facilities, pram parking and kid's meals in the cafe. The NGV in Melbourne also prides itself on welcoming kids of all ages, offering pram parking, a garden, as well as babyinos and kids lunch boxes at the cafe.

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## REAL MUMS' TOP TIPS

Our readers share their best advice for saying yes to life post-baby

"My local gym crèche was awesome. I had a pram that had a bassinet feature and my son had all his day sleeps in it, so I'd schedule plans around his naps. This also meant I could go out to dinner sometimes and he slept in there until we were home. We travelled around Europe with him at six weeks and I wore him in a sling; it was brilliant."  
Marni Little, mum to Archie, three.

"With my second child, I had a babysitter from 1-5pm two days a week from when he was 10 weeks. It meant I could do stuff alone with my older kid."  
Margaux Nissen Gray, mum to Mack, nine, and Harrison, three.

"With a new baby, it's relatively easy because you can still take the baby along everywhere – they love white noise and it's great training for later if they become accustomed to sleeping in noisy places."  
Caroline Eisman Bolot, mum to Laila, seven, Leo, six, Edie, three, and Ezra, one.

"Visit baby-friendly cafes. It gave me the ability to feel I was staring at something other than the clock or the four walls of my house."  
Nicola Carter, mum to Jack, five.

"Early on, I could take little bub with me to get a foot massage. She could be on my lap and I wouldn't have to move if she needed to feed."  
Angela Brown, mum to Zach, three, and Mila, one.

"Schedule your week with time for yourself. And let your baby have one good nap at home each day and the other nap in the pram so you can get out and do things for yourself."  
Emma Clark, mum to Tom, four.

"Husband: takes baby. Me: gets nails done. Gone for 1.5 hours. In between feeds. SILENCE. Pampering. Bliss."  
Dani Lombard, mum to Cleo, five.