

bye-bye, baby belly!

If you really want to get rid of your pregnancy paunch, you need to strengthen the innermost layer of abs, the transverse muscles, says Julie Tupler, R.N., author of *Maternal Fitness*. Her new DVD, *Lose Your Mummy Tummy* (available at Maternalfitness.com), features exercises designed to close up a diastasis—a separation in the central abdominal muscle that can occur when your belly expands during pregnancy. Here's one exercise to get you started:

the move Sit on the floor in a cross-legged position with your back supported against a wall. Place one hand under your breasts and the other on your navel. Inhale as you expand your belly, then exhale slowly, while bringing your belly button inward toward the spine. Pretend there's a train whose first stop is at your navel and whose fifth stop is at your spine. Count off stops until you reach the fifth. Hold and count out loud to 30. Then imagine your navel going out the back of your spine to a sixth stop for five counts. Relax and inhale. Work up to ten times daily.

do you have a diastasis?

To check, lie down on your back with your knees bent and your heels close to your butt. Place the fingers of one hand above or below your navel. As you lift your head up slightly, press your fingers straight down and feel for a soft gully (the diastasis) between the two harder muscle bands on either side.

calorie confusion

Can you dissect a nutrition label like a pro or reel off fat grams of favorite foods—yet don't have a clue how many calories you need to cut out to lose weight? You're in good company, suggests a new survey from the International Food Information Council, which found that nearly 90 percent of Americans are equally in the dark. To improve your weight-loss chances, use Caloriecontrol.org/calcalcs.html, an online calculator, to find out how many calories you need to eat to stay at your current weight, then create a plan for lowering that number. For instance, if your daily needs are 2,500 calories, you can try to consume just 2,200 calories and burn 300 more through exercise.

Mom knows best

"I always pick a time every day just for me to recharge, sit and read, or watch TV. With my first baby, it was after she went back to sleep every morning for her nap. I made a cup of decaf, sat on the couch, and read the front section of the paper."

—Kelly McElwain, Davidsville, PA

grain of truth

The first ovulation after pregnancy occurs on average 45 days after delivery, but 10 percent of women are able to ovulate within 21 days of giving birth. So it's important to use protection, even if you're nursing.