

BABY 0–12 months

born to run

Everything you need to know about taking your little one jogging with you. by **JEANINE DETZ**

THREE MONTHS after my son was born, I became nostalgic for my pre-baby body and decided to try running. With Calvin in his snap-and-go stroller, I took off on a dirt trail—but within seconds he was wailing. I quickly realized my mistake: He was being shaken like a kernel in a corn popper, and the sun was blinding him. While running with your baby can be a convenient way to squeeze in a workout, you need the right equipment and a green light from your pediatrician before you begin. Learn how to hoof it safely with baby on board.

→ Get in gear.

Whether you're on pavement or on a dirt trail, the trusty stroller you bring to the mall isn't designed for running. To work out with your baby, invest in a sport-specific ride. "Jogging strollers have large tires and adjustable shocks that minimize bouncing and ensure that your little one is comfortable," explains Claire Parrish, product manager for BOB Gear, a manufacturer of strollers and bike trailers. A locking front wheel pulls double duty, offering maneuverability around tight turns when in swivel mode and stability during high speeds in locked mode (to prevent tip-over accidents). Most models also come equipped with a hand brake and a wrist strap to prevent a runaway situation if you pick up too much speed or head down a steep incline.

→ Time it right.

Your little one needs to have good neck control before you take him out for a jog. "You wouldn't let your baby's head flop around if you were holding him, so make sure you don't let it do that in a stroller," says Amanda Weiss Kelly, M.D., chief of pediatric sports medicine at University Hospitals Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital, in Cleveland. "It could be painful and even cause an injury." Most babies can comfortably ride in a stroller without head support by 6 to 8 months, but your doctor should give you the final okay. Itching to start earlier? Purchase a jogging stroller that is specifically designed to accommodate a compatible infant car seat. "With your baby sitting in a safety seat, there's little difference to him whether you're walking or running," says Dr. Kelly.

→ Be cautious.

When you're running with a stroller, the safety of your baby is the most important thing, says Farel Hruska, national fitness director of Fit4Mom, a company that provides pre- and postnatal exercise classes. If you exercise at dawn or dusk, make sure your stroller's front, top, and sides have reflective accents. If you can't avoid busy streets, be extra vigilant: Don't assume drivers can see you and your baby coming (keep in mind that the front of a jogging stroller is low). Instead of sprinting through a

yellow light, stop and wait for it to turn green. Hruska also suggests using your jogging stroller's built-in safety features: "Before you start a run, make sure your child is buckled in, lock the front wheel forward, and if there's a wrist strap, put it on." And when you stop, even for a sip of water, engage the parking brake.

→ Prep for the weather.

Although you'll heat up as you move, your child will be staying still, so dress her accordingly. "Pretend you're not running and think about how much clothing you would have on—that's what your baby should wear," says Dr. Kelly. If poor weather won't deter you from exercising outdoors, invest in a rain shield to keep your workout partner dry. Don't forget about the sun: A canopy provides coverage, but periodically peek in on your baby to ensure that the rays aren't shining on her.

→ Schedule it in.

A content baby makes for more enjoyable exercise for you, so plan around meals and snoozes. "I've found that the best time to do a short run is just after my daughter, Linnéa, is fed—she's satisfied and ready for stimulation," says Alysia Montaña, a U.S. champion in the 800 meters who has been stroller jogging since her daughter was a few weeks old. "And her naptime is best for a longer run because she'll fall asleep." In general, avoid heading out right after your little one wakes up or when he's hungry. Chances are you won't get very far in peace.

If your child starts to fuss, continue for a bit to see if the motion calms him. No dice? Cut the jog short and try again later. "Some babies love it right away and others need a chance to get used to it," says Montaña. "Either way it's great to get out there even for a little bit." 🌀