



Interview with

Maya Nassar



Tell us a little about your background and what you have accomplished?

I used to be extremely unhealthy, was overweight and never did any exercise. I suffer from asthma and being so unfit meant that I had difficulty breathing by just going up the stairs. After hitting rock bottom, I decided to turn my life around and started eating healthy and going to the gym. Within a few months, I dropped five sizes and this triggered my new passion for a healthy lifestyle. I started doing fitness modeling competitions in the United Kingdom and won 6 trophies over the last 4 years. I became certified in personal training and sports nutrition and host a segment called Get Fit on MTV Lebanon.

What made you passionate about starting a Gym?

After losing weight and getting into shape, I started my own website and fitness mobile application called Start Living Right. This is an online platform that contains exercise programs, diet plans and many tips to help others live a healthy lifestyle. I wanted to help anyone like my old self who did not know what to do or how to start. The website did extremely well and then it became my mission to open a physical location for Start Living Right

where I can really help other people and change their lives the same way I changed my life through fitness.

How do you balance being a mother and a business owner?

I balance my time by being committed to both my business and my son. I believe in quality over quantity, so when I am with my son I give him my full attention and enjoy every second of my time with him. At the same time, I believe it is very important for every mother to work and have a career. Having my own gym gives me extreme happiness and satisfaction and this in turn makes me a better mother to my little boy.

What is the most rewarding aspect of owning this Gym?

The most rewarding aspect is changing other peoples' lives. Fitness is the most rewarding gift anyone can give to themselves. It makes you happier, healthier and more confident. Knowing that my business is changing the lives of other people is very motivating and makes me want to help as many people as possible.

How do you inspire others as a sports figure on your social media channels?

I try to share my story with them and hope that others can see if I can do it, then they can do it too. I have no background in fitness and was someone very unhealthy. If I can turn my life around and start competing internationally in fitness modeling, then definitely anyone else can do it too. I hope they can be inspired by my story and benefit from my experience through my website and mobile app. Your readers can download my app by searching for "startlivingright" as one word in their smartphone stores.

How other activities than social media do you do to reach you Audience?

I have a morning show on MTV which airs live twice a week. I hosted my segment all throughout my pregnancy and wanted to encourage other pregnant women to exercise with me. There are many myths about exercising during pregnancy and I wanted to show why it is important and necessary. I also host workshops and seminars to reach out to other people and help them by sharing my story and my experiences.

We know that you have just delivered a handsome boy, "Andrew", how was your experience being pregnant while remaining active as a Gym owner and as an athlete/coach?

It was a great experience! I exercised all throughout my pregnancy and worked as a business owner right until I went into delivery. Being active and busy helped me have an easy pregnancy and also maintain a healthy weight. I would to empower other pregnant women and show them that they can still live their lives to the fullest throughout their pregnancy.

Did you follow any specific Diet during your pregnancy?

I ate a healthy and well-balanced diet throughout my pregnancy. I avoided processed foods and junk food and only ate these occasionally. My diet consisted of fruits, vegetables, lean protein, healthy fat and wholegrain carbohydrates. During the first trimester, a pregnant woman does not need any extra calories. At the second trimester she needs an additional 300 calories a day and during the third trimester she needs an additional 500 calories a day.

What exercises should a pregnant perform during her 1st, 2nd, and 3rd trimester so she can comfortably perform ADLs (activities for daily living) during her pregnancy?

A pregnant woman is encouraged to exercise all throughout her pregnancy. She can continue doing the same activities she was doing before pregnancy but at a lower intensity. Depending on the woman's level of fitness, she can do light cardio and weightlifting throughout all trimesters. Many pregnant woman also love doing Pilates and yoga to help them relax during their pregnancy.

How many hours should a pregnant woman exercise per week?

The exact number of hours depends on a woman's fitness level, but as a general rule I advise a pregnant woman to do at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day. This will keep her strong and fit during her pregnancy.

How does exercising help the pregnant woman in her daily routine?

Along with making a pregnant woman physically stronger, exercise also helps a woman maintain a healthy weight during her pregnancy. A pregnant woman will instantly feel hungrier and have more cravings, and exercise will help her burn off excess calories. Exercise also releases the anti-stress hormones called endorphins which will help a pregnant woman feel happier and control any mood swings that she might experience during her pregnancy. Exercising also has many benefits for the baby and research has shown that it strengthens the baby's heart.

Are there any Warning Signs When Exercising during Pregnancy?

Every pregnant woman should consult with her doctor before exercising. As a general rule, a pregnant woman should avoid doing high intensity exercise to the point that she is out of breath. A safe way to measure the intensity is for a pregnant woman to still be able to have a conversation during her training and not reach a point where she is unable to speak. If a pregnant woman experiences any nausea, dizziness, pain or headaches then she should stop immediately.

Who should not exercise during pregnancy?

Women with low placenta, threatened miscarriage, weak cervixes or a history of premature labor should avoid exercising during her pregnancy. If a woman has no medicinal conditions then she can and should exercise. As mentioned previously, she should check with her doctor.

What Exercises Should Be Avoided During Pregnancy?

A pregnant woman should avoid exercising flat on her back and training her abs during the second and third trimesters to avoid putting pressure on the uterus. Sports that carry a risk of abdominal injury should be avoided, such as basketball, tennis, volleyball and soccer. Sports that carry the risk of falling such as skiing, horse-riding, outdoor cycling, water sports should also be avoided.

Does exercising facilitate the process of the delivery for a pregnant lady?

Absolutely! Exercising will help a pregnant woman have an easier and faster delivery and also decreases the risk of having a caesarian. Being physically active also helps to position the baby in the right angle for a natural delivery.

How Soon Can a woman Exercise After Delivery?

It usually takes a woman 6 weeks to return to exercise after a natural birth and 2 months or longer after a caesarian. She should always check with her doctor before getting the green light to return back to exercise.

