

mx Health

Great expectations

As if being a new mum isn't hard enough, celebrity yummy mummies are putting unrealistic pressure on women to return to their pre-baby shape in record time, as **MICHELLE READ** discovered.



Stepping out in a London park last month, Geri Halliwell looked every bit the celebrity new mother.

An iPod dangled casually from her neck, her svelte figure was clad in a tight-fitting singlet and shorts and baby was nowhere to be seen.

Just five weeks after giving birth to Bluebell Madonna, Halliwell looked even thinner than she did pre-pregnancy.

Like most celebrities, Halliwell can thank a team of personal trainers, cooks, dietitians, personal assistants and even surgeons for their return to form.

The post-baby snap back is now expected of celebrity mothers, whose pregnancies are tracked from the first signs of the "baby bump" through to the now-expected fast weight loss.

Halliwell is just one of many celebrity mothers who turn up in women's magazines looking fit, fresh and fabulous just weeks after popping their tots.

Catherine Zeta Jones famously shed the more than 22kg she gained while pregnant with her first son, Dylan, within weeks of giving birth.

Victoria Beckham's figure bounced back three weeks after the caesarean birth of her third son Cruz.

Kate Hudson worked out for three

hours a day to shed her baby weight while Uma Thurman had healthy food delivered daily.

Denise Richards hit the gym every day at 5am and Reese Witherspoon turned to regular yoga classes.

And there was supermodel Heidi Klum, who took to the catwalk for a Victoria's Secret lingerie parade less than two months after giving birth to son Henry in September last year.

Everyday mothers don't have it so easy, according to Monash University PhD student Meredith Nash.

Nash, who is researching women's body image during pregnancy, says many mothers "feel really terrible looking at these celebrities who have a stick figure and just a bump".

"Women feel a lot of pressure to conform to a certain body type ... a lot of women say, I don't feel pregnant, I feel fat," she said.

"Photographs of tight and polished post-partum celebrity bodies are likely to be influencing the diet and fitness regimens of the average Australian woman trying to lose her baby weight."

Nash said many women countered unrealistic weight loss images by talking about their post-baby health and fitness with friends, family and mothers' groups.

Melbourne's Royal Women's Hospital nutritionist Elizabeth Gasparini said new mothers should not expect the dramatic post-pregnancy weight loss experienced by the stars.

"Pregnancy is now seen as more than a stage in life, it's almost a fashion," she said.

"It's all coming from this term 'yummy mummies', this image of women who look stunning during and after pregnancy."

Gasparini said women should maintain their weight and health before and during pregnancy by eating well and exercising regularly.

Losing weight post-pregnancy would be easier if women avoided the "eating for two" trap and did not count on losing any pregnancy weight gain through breastfeeding, she said.

"If you're fit and healthy and eating well your weight is going to be where it should be throughout your pregnancy," she said.

"Really, after having a baby you should be enjoying motherhood and not worrying about how you look."



FIVE STEPS FOR HEALTHY POST-PREGNANCY WEIGHT LOSS

1 Eat regular meals and include a variety of foods from all food groups, with an emphasis on dairy if breastfeeding.

2 If you're having trouble shifting extra kilos, choose low-fat, low-sugar foods to minimise unnecessary kilojoules.

3 Be organised. Stock the pantry with healthy snacks and the freezer with extra meals. You'll

be less likely to resort to takeaway meals and unhealthy snacks if you are prepared.

4 Exercise daily. Concentrate on gentle exercise such as walking with the pram and avoid anything more strenuous (such as the gym) for several weeks or until you feel you are ready. Don't forget your pelvic floor and abdominal exercises.

5 Nourish your emotional needs with adequate rest, some pampering like a facial, and asking for help when you need it. Your emotional wellbeing is important to support your physical health.



Geri Halliwell is reportedly even thinner than she was pre-pregnancy.