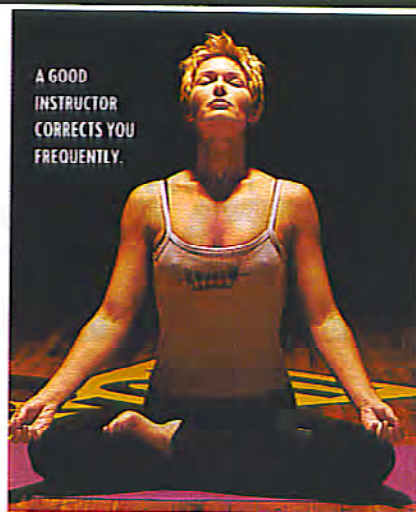


Yoga Without Injuries

► At cocktail parties around the country, women gush over yoga's mind/body benefits, but if you're not careful, it can lead to injuries such as pulled muscles in your back and shoulders. Mark Blanchard, a yoga instructor and owner of Yogatime in Beverly Hills, offers these pointers for a safe yoga experience:

TELL YOUR INSTRUCTOR BEFORE CLASS ABOUT ANY PAST INJURIES OR PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS, such as back problems or pregnancy, so she

can make sure you don't overextend yourself. For example, spine-twisting postures can be dangerous to pregnant women. **IF THE ROOM IS PACKED, DON'T TAKE THE CLASS.** "If you can't see the instructor, she can't see you and correct mistakes that cause injury," Blanchard says. Also, make sure the studio is comfortably cool; if it's too hot, you'll sweat out fluids too quickly, and if it's too cold, your muscles won't be pliable.



A GOOD INSTRUCTOR CORRECTS YOU FREQUENTLY.

LOOK FOR AN ATTENTIVE INSTRUCTOR. If she doesn't check people's postures or periodically remind you to take deep breaths through the nose only, she is dangerously inexperienced.

and...

► **A heart monitor that talks!** "Mike," the Heartalker Personal Trainer, is the first heart-rate monitor to tell you when you're at your target zone or encourage you if you're not ("You can do it!" he says). Just place the strap around your chest and the earphones on your head—and get moving. (\$80; to order: 800-639-5432.)

► **Scuba in a hurry** For National Scuba Diving Month, the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) has made it easier to dive without being certified. Its new course provides students with a precertification card after two dives, so you can dive with a professional without taking a beginner's lesson each time. (Previously, you had to take the basic lesson over and over unless you were certified.) For information, call (800) 729-7234.



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Ab Work After a C-Section

Q: I recently had a C-section and want to firm up my abs. What exercises are safe?

A: You'd be surprised at how quickly you can resume abdominal exercises after surgery. As long as you wait two or three days, the following exercises are safe (though you should check with your doctor first). They're also great reentry moves for whenever you fall off the fitness wagon and want to ease your abs into shape. Although some postexercise soreness is normal, see your doctor if you experience any pain.

1. The Tupter Technique, designed by Julie Tupter, R.N., author of *Maternal Fitness*, can be performed within a day or two after surgery. Sit on a chair with your feet flat on the floor, place one hand behind your back, palm against your body with fingertips touching the

spine, and take in a fast, deep breath. As you exhale, squeeze your abdominal muscles, pulling them inward as if you were trying to bring your belly button toward your spine. Repeat 100 times, exhaling with each quick pull-in (this should take about two minutes). Aim for five sets of 100.

2. A modified crunch, designed by Ann Swayne, the director of the pre- and postnatal exercise program at the Highland Park Hospital Fitness Center in Buffalo Grove, Illinois, can also be done shortly after surgery. Lie on the floor with your legs straight. Concentrate on squeezing your abs as you raise your head, bring your chin to your chest, and look at your toes. Lower and repeat 20 times.



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