

# SELF

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TRENDING

By Korin Miller

## This Photo Shows That Loose Skin Is Normal After Giving Birth, Even If You Have A Six-Pack


A recent Instagram upload from fitness blogger Anna Strode is reassurance that plenty of women have loose skin postpartum, no matter how fit they are.



Post-baby bodies come in all shapes and sizes—that's something we've repeatedly seen in person and on social media. And loose skin, a normal development after giving birth, can stick around no matter how fit you were pre-baby or whether you've resumed your fitness routine after bringing a child into the world. In a new Instagram post, fitness blogger Anna Strode is showing exactly how true that is.

Strode, who's mom to 8-month-old twins, posted a side-by-side composite of two photos taken just moments apart. In one photo, Strode is sitting down, the shot focusing on the loose skin on her stomach. In the picture next to it, she's kneeling, her ab muscles on full display. "It's not easy for me to do this," Strode wrote in the caption. "I promise you as I post this I am no joke absolutely sh\*tting myself, but the reason I'm doing this is to show you we're ALL REAL! We all have things we wish we could change, it's easy to get caught up in the perfect world of social media but DON'T! Because behind every image is someone that has things they wish they could change too."

Strode also advises moms to "be proud, be kind, [and] love your body for what it has done. Stretch marks, loose skin, bellies and saggy boobs—embrace it mummas because you are BEAUTIFUL." Check out the full post below:

An Instagram post from the user 'bubs2bikinis' posted 1 week ago. The post features two side-by-side photographs of a woman. The left photo shows her from the waist up, sitting on a wooden deck, wearing a grey t-shirt and a black sports bra with 'DRI-FIT' written on it. Her stomach is visible, showing loose skin. The right photo shows her kneeling on a carpeted floor, wearing a black sports bra and black leggings, holding a smartphone to take a selfie. Two young children are sitting on the floor in front of her. The caption discusses body image and social media perfection. The post has 2,957 likes and 217 comments.

**bubs2bikinis** · 1 week ago

2 pictures taken moments apart. The pic on the left is one that might resemble what you see as you scroll your Instagram feed each day. The pic on the right probably reminds you of the ones you think you could never possibly share with the world. Polar opposites ~ but guess what, I've decided that both pictures MAKE ME PROUD. Everyday we are surrounded by images that are supposed to represent 'perfection' but why can't the pic on the left represent perfection too?! The pic on the left represents what my body is capable of ~ growing 2 babies, yes! Little humans that have come into the world and made me the happiest mumma in the whole wide world! It's not easy for me to do this, I promise you as I post this I am no joke absolutely sh\*tting myself but the reason I'm doing this is to show you we're ALL REAL! We all have things we wish we could change, it's easy to get caught up in the perfect world of social media but DON'T! Because behind every image is someone that has things they wish they could change too. Be proud, be kind, love your body for what it has done. Stretch marks, loose skin, bellies and saggy boobs - embrace it mummas because you are BEAUTIFUL 🤗👶👶🥰

2,957 likes 217 comments

Instagram

We often hear about new moms who have excess skin or six-pack abs—but usually not both. But Jim Pivarnik, Ph.D., a professor of kinesiology at Michigan State University who studies the effects of exercise on pregnant women, tells SELF that this combo is probably more common than you'd think. Loose postpartum stomach skin “happens to almost all new moms,” he says. “It’s just a question of degree.”

Why does it happen? It really depends on the elasticity of a woman’s skin, how much it stretched during her pregnancy, and postpartum weight loss, Pivarnik says. “There are plenty of fit women who don’t have tight abdominal skin to start with,” he says. That can result in a woman having jacked muscles but excess skin after giving birth, he explains.

Losing weight quickly can also increase the odds that a woman will have excess skin after giving birth. “The skin is made of elastin and collagen, allowing the skin to expand with a growing belly,” women’s health expert Jennifer Wider, M.D., tells SELF. “The skin has more time to recover and regain elasticity if a woman gradually loses weight after her pregnancy. If she loses it rapidly, the skin has much less time to recover.”

While there’s nothing wrong with having excess stomach skin—it’s normal, after all—Wider says you can lower the odds this will happen to you by losing postpartum weight slowly, exercising, and drinking plenty of water. “Exercise helps the body regain its natural shape [and] water hydrates the skin and allows the body to work more efficiently,” she explains.

If you already have excess skin from a pregnancy, Gary Goldenberg, M.D., medical director of the Dermatology Faculty Practice at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, tells SELF that you can do something about it. The first option is to wait, since he says time typically makes loose skin better, but there are also treatments that can potentially help, like microneedling. The procedure involves a handheld device covered in metal spikes getting rolled over the surface of the skin, and it may stimulate collagen production, he says, while ultrasound or radiofrequency therapy can tighten the skin.

But above all, don’t freak out—excess postpartum belly skin is just one of those things that can happen after pregnancy, even if you’re incredibly fit. “It’s not uncommon for new moms to have loose skin after having a baby,” Wider says. The bottom line: You’re far from alone on this one.