A Return to Diving After Pregnancy

It’s something many young female divers are faced with – pregnancy. Regardless of the stage of pregnancy, the recommendations are the same: no diving. There is little research on the effects of diving on a fetus, and the research that has been conducted outlines major risks for your developing baby. Between the pregnancy and post-partum recovery, most women are faced with being out of the water for at least 10 months, but a year is more realistic.

I was a frequent diver before I discovered I was pregnant. In fact, it was right after I returned home from a bucket-list worthy dive trip to Grunersee in Austria that my husband and I found out we were expecting. I immediately hung up my fins, waxed my dry suit zipper before gently rolling it up, and made sure my gear was safely stored away. It was a hard year to say the least. Something my husband and I had done together for years was now off the table. I was counting down the weeks until I could return to the water.

When I finally did don my gear again, it had been 11 months. I won’t lie, I was nervous. Despite the fact that I dove regularly before becoming pregnant, it had been months since I had been in the water. This body had just grown a human and I was still getting used to the changes. I was worried I would forget how to swim or that my buoyancy and trim would be terrible. That first time back, I joined a good friend of ours, who is also a very good dive instructor, in the pool. It was a gentle way to become re-acclimated to breathing underwater, and the feeling of mask on my face and a regulator in my mouth. It was also the first time in our daughter’s life that I wasn’t immediately available for her – and, to be honest, it was liberating. The freedom and tranquility I feel when underwater came rushing back and I thought to myself, “This is why I dive!”

Not long after, my husband and I scheduled a trip to Norway where we planned to do some diving in the fjords. My sister joined us and offered to babysit so we could dive together. It was during that first dive together that I remembered why I loved diving with him so much – we knew each other’s style, understood the hand signals, we trusted each other. The boat was well-equipped and my sister and our daughter joined us. Since I was breastfeeding her, I could not be away from her for more than a couple hours at a time. In between dives, I sat there and fed her, all while still half way kitted up for diving… I felt a little bit like super mom!

So what are some lessons I learned upon returning to the water after a long hiatus? **Be patient with yourself**. Give yourself time so you aren’t rushed. Become reacquainted with your gear before you get in the water, and realize that it may be heavier than you remember. Make sure your gear is properly serviced and ready for a safe dive. Have your first “dive” back be in a pool – not in a shipwreck in 100 feet (33 meters for our metric friends) of water. **Trust yourself**. You’ve done this before and will quickly remember how it’s done; I dare say it’s a bit like riding a bike. But most importantly, **keep doing it**. You got into this sport for a reason, now that you’re back, keep at it.

About the author

Meghan is a diver returning to the water after giving birth to her first daughter. She and her husband spent two years living – and diving – in Germany, but has recently repatriated to the US. She blogs over at www.submergedoaks.com about everything from life as expats to travel and diving all over the world. When she's not blogging or diving, she enjoys spending time travelling with her husband and daughter.

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