

# INDEPENDANT EVALUATION

# CARiFiT

BABYWEARING WORKOUTS

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## Executive Summary

This evaluation aims to explore the physical and wider psychosocial gains of taking part in the CARiFiT workout during the postnatal period. This is report that details the findings from a self-report evaluation questionnaire that was completed by a sample of mother's who take part in CARiFiT. Seventy participants complete the questionnaire and comprised a group of mother's engaging with the CARiFiT program via either online membership or live classes.



# OVERVIEW

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The post-natal period is a time when women's mental health and well-being can become more vulnerable. There are significant changes to the body, shifts in hormones, sleep deprivation, shifts in roles and identity, and the daily demands of feeding and taking care of a newborn. It's an overwhelming period that can have a detrimental effect on a mother's mental health and well-being. Good maternal mental health is vital for the healthy social, emotional and mental development of an infant. Returning to physical activity after pregnancy is associated with positive physical and mental health benefits.

The evaluation found CARiFiT had a positive impact on numerous areas of the participants' physical, emotional and social lives. CARiFiT had a positive impact on physical health outcomes (e.g. improving strength, fitness, energy levels and weight loss) that further increased body confidence, coping with the physical demands of parenting, understanding of safe post-natal exercising and improved pregnancy and post-natal physical health issues.

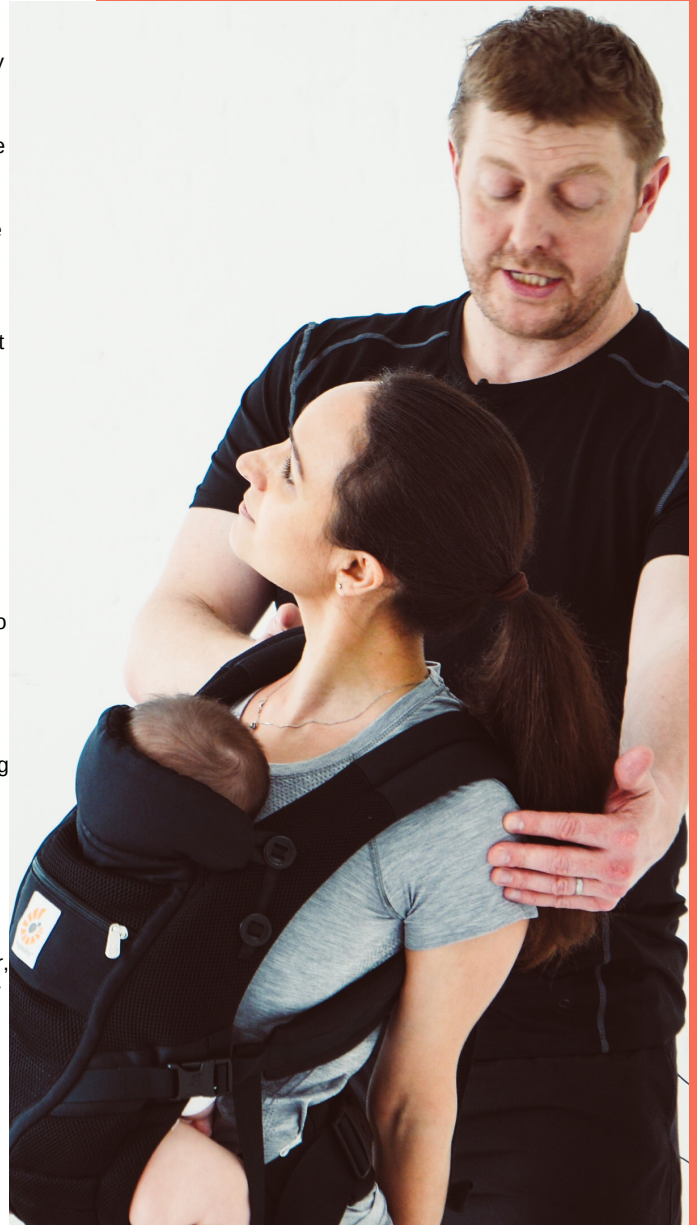
Mothers in the evaluation reported how engagement with the CARiFiT workout contributed to improving the mental health during the post-natal period in a number of areas such as increasing mood, reducing anxiety and stress, building self-confidence, and improving confidence in parenting ability. This was strongly linked to the challenging and results driven nature of the workout that provided a strong sense of achievement and endorphin release.

CARiFiT also was found to offer mothers a space for parents to have much needed 'time for themselves' - with the baby wearing aspect enabling parents to integrate exercise into their daily lives whilst strengthening the bond with their baby and experiencing less mum guilt. Mothers felt that CARiFiT had also importantly helped them regain a sense of their identity.

Another outcome for parents attending CARiFiT found in this evaluation was it provided a space to for peer to peer support amongst mothers where parenting advice, reassurance and company was shared. This was reported both for online and live class CARiFiT attendees, and was found to reduce risks associated with isolation and lack of support further enhanced well-being and parenting abilities.

CARiFiT had a positive impact on parenting - mothers reported feeling happier, more available, better able to cope with the demands and having more energy to interact with their babies – all of which are optimal for healthy infant development. It was also indicated how the baby wearing aspect of CARiFiT had strengthened the bonds between mother and baby alongside offering a platform to role model to their children the benefits of engaging in exercise in the future. Furthermore, the benefits of baby wearing found from taking part in CARiFiT resulted in mothers using the sling more often in daily life, which was found to further benefit both the baby and parent (e.g. happier, calmer, bonding, etc).

This evaluation demonstrates that CARiFiT has an impact across physical health, mental health and parenting outcomes for mothers in the post-natal period. Furthermore, these outcomes above interacted with one another to enhance the improvements and impacts found. For example, the physical challenge of the CARiFiT workouts enabled mothers to achieve their post-natal physical health goals which in turn promoted self-confidence and improved mood and further contributed to them being a happier, more available parent.



## MENTAL

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On the evaluation questionnaire 100% of participants reported that engaging in the CARiFiT workout had in some way benefited their mental health and well-being. 98% of participants who completed the evaluation 'agreed' to "strongly agreed" feeling like they 'have better mental health' since taking part in CARiFiT.

## PHYSICAL

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The evaluation demonstrated the many physical gains of the CARiFiT workout. On the questionnaire, 98% of participants 'agreed' to 'strongly agreed' that engaging in CARiFiT had made them feel more fit and healthy. Furthermore, 98% of participants also 'agreed' to 'strongly agreed' that engaging in CARiFiT had made them physically stronger.

## EMOTIONAL

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On the evaluation questionnaire, 98% of participants "agreed" to "strongly agreed" that they felt 'more confident in myself' since engaging with CARiFiT. On the evaluation questionnaire, 92% of participants "agreed" to "strongly agreed" that they felt like 'a happier parent' since taking part in CARiFiT.

## SOCIAL

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It was reported by many participants how another gain from CARiFiT was it had enabled them to meet other mothers, and offered a space for peer to peer support, advice and reassurance. Such social networks and support were formed both within the online community or meeting other mothers at the live classes. On the evaluation, 87% "agreed" to "strongly agreed" that they had 'an increased sense of community' since engaging with CARiFiT.

## CONCLUSION

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The findings in this evaluation provided an initial understanding of the scope an intervention like CARiFiT could promise in helping to enhance physical and mental health as well as parenting capacity for mothers in the post-natal period. Health and social care professionals within perinatal, primary care or community based services that support mothers in the antenatal and post-natal period should consider recommending engagement with CARiFiT to support their mental health and physical well-being.



# MASTERS THESIS STUDY :

Do CARiFiT babywearing workouts during the post-natal period improve a mother's mental health and bonding with baby and impact pelvic floor muscle recovery?'

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## Study Aim

The study rationale was to determine if CARiFiT babywearing workouts provided a positive effect on a mother's mental health, bond with baby and pelvic floor health over an 8-week time frame than in the non-babywearing exercise control group. 3 validated outcome measures were used, to assess post-natal depression the EPDS (Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale), bonding with baby the PBQ (Postnatal Bonding Questionnaire) and pelvic floor dysfunction the APFQ (Australian Pelvic Floor Questionnaire).



# KEY FINDINGS

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- Doing CARiFiT is scientifically proven to improve post natal depressive symptoms.
- CARiFiT is scientifically shown to improve the bonding between mother and baby.
- CARiFiT babywearing workouts improve postnatal pelvic floor recovery.



## Comments from Lucy

**Results:** Women who participated in the CARiFiT babywearing workouts groups had lower depression scores, greater bonding with baby and were less symptomatic of pelvic floor dysfunction than the control group.

**Conclusions:** The physical intervention of CARiFiT babywearing workouts have been shown to improve a new mothers psychological wellbeing and bond with baby when compared with mothers who do not participate in formal babywearing workouts during the post-natal period.