**TRANSCRIPT:**

**[0:00 - 0:31]**  
**Kath Megaw:** Hi everyone, it's so awesome to be back with the Feed & Sense podcast today. And I'm very excited for today's podcast because I'm joined by a good friend of mine, Annéke. And we've done a few things together over the years. And I'm very excited to hear the wisdom that she's going to bring to us today as moms. So Annéke, welcome to the Feed & Sense podcast with Sense by Meg. So lovely to have you. Do you want to maybe just tell everyone a little bit about you?

**[0:31 - 2:10]**  
**Annéke de Silva:** Thank you. It is so nice to be back. We haven't spoken in quite a while because in the meantime, I've had a baby, another one. So yes, I'm Annéke De Silva. I own Glowfit Training. So it's a female focused health and fitness and wellness studio. My main speciality is pre and postnatal, although I do have other clients as well. But that's really where my true passion and my love lies. Exercise through pregnancy, you know, help educating women on all the many, many benefits of staying active throughout pregnancy and how to get back into your fitness postpartum, you know, safely. And when can you start? How do you start? And then into that as well, incorporating breastfeeding, you know, managing the whole lifestyle during pregnancy afterwards and becoming a mom and juggling all of that. I've got two beautiful daughters myself. My oldest is six already. She turned six last month and my youngest just turned one as well. They're very close together in birthdays. And yeah, she's still at home with me, the little one. So I'm at the moment juggling everything myself, fitness, a baby, a mom, a wife, life. So yeah, I'm really in the thick of it, but I'm loving it. The second time around has really been a lot different than the first time. But yeah, and just trying to still grow my career and still, you know, be out there and educate women on all the benefits and just, you know, how to have a healthy postpartum and motherhood, you know, because it can be quite a challenging journey. So I love to be there to support women.

**[2:10 - 2:35]**  
**Kath Megaw:** I love that. And I'm looking forward to some of the nuggets you're going to bring to us and all the moms juggling. And it's definitely real and wild out there. So let's just jump right into it. What types of exercises, just very briefly, would you say are recommended during pregnancy? And is it different between your first, second and third trimester?

**[2:36 - 3:59]**  
**Annéke de Silva:** So the general rule of thumb we use is we stick to pre-pregnancy activities. So whatever you did pre-pregnancy, you can continue with throughout your pregnancy. And we just adjust intensity and certain movements as we go throughout your trimesters. So as your body changes biomechanically and anatomy, you know, wise, the structure, the biomechanics of your body, we start to change and alter exercises. As some of the exercises becomes more difficult due to the shift of your centre of gravity, your balance gets difficult. It's not easy to get up and down off the floor all the time. So the sessions change a lot, the structure of the sessions. But most of the time we stick to whatever you did pre-pregnancy. And as your pregnancy progresses, we just take your intensity down towards the end of your pregnancy. And then the biggest thing that we do adjust is your core safety. So exercises that you maybe did pre-pregnancy to have your six pack ab appearance or to have a strong core, we are completely taking out or making sure that you're not doing them during pregnancy. Because even before pregnancy, it's not to say that those are safe. You can still have diastasis recti, even if you're not pregnant. So a lot of people think it's only during pregnancy, but you can actually still develop that pre-pregnancy.

**[4:00 - 4:04]**  
**Kath Megaw:** So just explain to the audience what that big name means.

**[4:05 - 5:05]**  
**Annéke de Silva:** So diastasis recti is when your transverse abdominal muscles, your rectus abdominis, the muscles that give you the six pack appearance, when they split. So they're not completely closed when you're not pregnant. So they're not like stitched together, if I can call it that. There's a thin sheet in between the muscles called the linea alba. And that can't hold your abdominal muscles together as the pregnant belly grows. So as the pregnant belly grows, the abdominal muscles kind of split away. And obviously the stronger your core is before pregnancy, the less that gap will be. But all women get a degree of diastasis because those muscles cannot stay exactly as they are as the belly grows. That's why we want a strong core before pregnancy already, so that we can minimise it as much as possible during pregnancy. And then the recovery will also be a lot quicker postpartum.

**[5:05 - 5:47]**  
**Kath Megaw:** Okay, all right. So basically, in a nutshell, you can do the exercises that you were kind of, the form of activity you were doing pre-pregnancy, but then your core exercises will adjust and change as your centre of gravity changes during your pregnancy. So that's very encouraging. And obviously, you know, from my perspective, if women are keeping up with their healthy nutritional intake, then they're going to still meet the requirements of what their baby needs and that while they're exercising, which is obviously very important. So let's move into and jump now. We've had our baby. How soon after birth can I start working out?

**[5:48 - 7:16]**  
**Annéke de Silva:** So this is probably one of the biggest questions that I get very often, especially if I get a client that loves exercise and she feels like she's been a bit stunted during her pregnancy, you know, because you can't go as full and as hard as you did pre-pregnancy. So the guideline that we use is if you had a natural birth, once your bleeding has stopped, your postpartum bleeding, which can be anywhere from four weeks onwards. Some women bleed four weeks, some it lasts a bit longer. So we really want that bleeding to stop before you start exercising. If you had a C-section, nothing before six weeks. But this is always, it's funny now that I've also had two babies of my own. Before the first one, I was also like, "Yes, I can't wait for that four to six weeks mark because I'm going to start gymming again and I'm going to start training again." But once you're there, you know, you kind of feel like, "Okay, cool. Physically, I can exercise again." But you are so in the little bubble and the thick of your new little born baby that you don't really want to get there yet. You know, so yes, you can go for walks and stuff. But I find that it's not that easy as you think it might be to just get going with exercise again, because there's so much happening and it can be so overwhelming. But that is the guideline we use. So four weeks natural birth, bleeding has stopped. Six weeks, definitely, if your gynaecologist gave you the green light.

**[7:16 - 7:40]**  
**Kath Megaw:** OK, that's very helpful. That's a really good guideline. And are there specific exercises that a mom can do that will strengthen the pelvic floor? And would you focus on the core immediately? So we haven't really been looking at the core during our pregnancy. We understand why. How soon can you now start working on your core muscles? And is it important to work on the pelvic floor muscles?

**[7:41 - 9:13]**  
**Annéke de Silva:** Yes. So typically all the exercises we use during your pregnancy, the core belly breathing and how to incorporate that into your exercises, we want to continue with as soon as possible postpartum. Those are some exercises that you can do immediately after birth, in the hospital, when you are home, sitting on the couch, breastfeeding. But those are very gentle. It's with the correct core belly pump breathing and contracting your pelvic floor because your core works as a full unit, your diaphragm, your transverse and rectus abdominis and then your pelvic floor. It's like a little box. So those all work together. So if you have the correct belly breathing as well as engaging your pelvic floor, you can do that as soon as you can from once you've had your baby. C-section or natural. Because your core and your pelvic floor still takes quite a hit with a C-section. A lot of women think "I'm going to have a C-section. My pelvic floor is going to be fine." But it's not always the actual birthing of the baby that causes issues with the pelvic floor. It is when you carry your baby. It's the weight of the baby on the pelvic floor that still causes strain. So that has happened whatever birth you had. So those are the type of exercises we start with soon after birth. And then once you come to me, we start incorporating them into gentle movements. Just to learn your body, to teach your body how to move while breathing correctly to support your pelvic floor.

**[9:13 - 9:51]**  
**Kath Megaw:** So there's hope. But it also sounds that it's fairly specific. And I mean, you're incredibly knowledgeable. So I think it is important for moms out there to hear that. Get good sound advice. Don't just kind of just jump into any gym class and just hope for the best. I think it is really important. It's a whole science on its own. Can exercise affect milk supply? So the mom who wants to breastfeed and is keen to breastfeed and able to breastfeed after birth. Can exercise affect that positively or negatively?

**[9:53 - 10:50]**  
**Annéke de Silva:** I think this is a very big myth. A lot of moms think, "I can't exercise after birth. It's going to affect my milk supply." And that is a very big myth. It will not affect your milk supply if you are having a nutritious whole food diet, if you're still eating enough. So if you're still nourishing your body, your breast milk will not be affected by exercise. It won't change the taste of the milk. It won't change the quality of the milk. And it will not decrease your milk supply. So the biggest thing around that is why some moms think it does, it's because you sweat. So you're sweaty and a lot of moms afterwards, before showering, they maybe want to feed their baby. And then the baby doesn't want to latch due to the sweat on the mom's skin. That I think is sometimes where the misconception comes in. So it's not the milk. So if you are having a good diet and you're doing your normal exercises, like you usually did, your milk supply will be fine. So please exercise. Please continue. Your milk will be fine.

**[10:51 - 11:33]**  
**Kath Megaw:** I love that. So that's so helpful. And I think also just you need to drink water in abundance when you breastfeed. So one thing when you exercise, you're also more conscious of drinking water. So it could even be helpful there. Because you're just thinking about like exercise, water drinking, healthy eating. And they all kind of go together. So I think that that actually does. They all support each other. They're not against each other. And I love that. Is it safe to do high impact workouts after birth and during breastfeeding? Obviously your breasts are feeling fuller and everything like that. And what is your feeling around that?

**[11:34 - 12:53]**  
**Annéke de Silva:** So pelvic floor wise, no. High impact exercises needs to only be incorporated from about 12, 16 weeks onwards. Then you can likely start with that again, if you have put in the work initially to start strengthening your pelvic floor again. Breastfeeding wise, as long as you have a good supportive bra and you try to feed before your exercise session. So, you know, if you know you're going to exercise in the next half an hour, quickly try to get a feed in. And if the baby has already fed, do a quick pump. Put the milk in the fridge and then go exercise. So get the breasts as empty as possible and then have a very good supportive bra and preferably without underwire. We've noticed that bras with underwire tend to lead to more irritation and can also lead to a bit more clogged ducts in some women. So have a good supportive bra, but try to avoid one with underwire. But other than that, you're more than welcome to start with once your rehab, you know, pelvic floor wise has, and it's the correct time for you to incorporate high impact again, it won't have an effect on the breast milk. It might just be a bit uncomfortable, even if you have a very supportive bra. So it might just feel a bit different than what you were used to pre-pregnancy.

**[12:54 - 13:44]**  
**Kath Megaw:** Oh, that's so helpful. I mean, just such rich tips coming out of our conversation. It was really a helpful tip you gave about the pelvic floor with regards to high impact exercise. So moms out there 16 to 20 weeks, if you've done the pelvic floor work, and then just a supportive bra for breastfeeding, try and empty your breasts if you can, which is also really helpful. And the underwire makes so much sense and something I wasn't even aware of. So it's really, really helpful because we definitely don't want moms feeling engorged after an exercise session. So now a real question, this is real life. How do I stay motivated? So how does a mom who's got a newborn, sleep deprived, been breastfeeding all night, stay motivated to exercise? Like what are some tips there on that?

**[13:45 - 16:31]**  
**Annéke de Silva:** Oh, you know, that's such a... like I say, before you had a baby, I think you have all these ideals and ideas in your head of how your postpartum is going to look. And I think every mom experiences it so differently. And I think that sometimes can come as such a shock to the system that you, you didn't expect it to be this overwhelming or this hard or this busy, you know, 'cause you're actually busy like all day. So I would say just, you know, mother with grace, rather than guilt. You know, just be, just have grace with yourself. And if you were planning on going for a walk today, but phew, you've just had a hard day with the baby, the cluster feeding, and all you actually end up doing is sitting on the couch, breastfeeding all day, watching a series. Now as a mom of two, having gone through it twice, enjoy that. You know, don't feel guilty about having days where you just watch series and you are feeding because you're still doing so much, you are doing a lot. And then you're going to have days where it's easy and the baby is sleeping in the pram and you can do a walk and some weight training in your gym, or you managed to go for a quick session at the gym and get out of the house a bit. So I think it's to have grace with yourself and to know you're going to have days where it's not going to be possible and it is okay. You will get back to that point where it gets easier, where the baby gets easier and can be with you in the place wherever you are active. And everything will get back to normal, even though it doesn't feel like that in that first six weeks, especially, but just be easy on yourself and know that you are doing enough and you're doing the best you can. And whatever workout you do get to is a bonus. Because at that moment, just enjoy your baby. I know this sounds ridiculous because you might be listening to this in the thick of that postpartum. And you might be thinking, "Oh my God, you're talking nonsense. This is hard." It is hard, but try to enjoy it for what it is and don't set too high expectations for yourself. 'Cause I found with my first baby, that's where I kind of was too hard on myself. I wanted to do all of these things every day. And I didn't get to them. And that kind of disappointed myself. Whereas the second one, I was like, "Nah, we're just chilling today. We're going to watch some TV and we're going to chill on the couch." And it's okay. Enjoy your baby. And enjoy that time at home, because especially if you're a mom that has to go back to work after four months, you're going to miss it. You know, it's one of those hindsight ones. So it might not feel like that in the moment, but just have grace. Just have grace. Probably my biggest advice.

**[16:32 - 17:35]**  
**Kath Megaw:** I love that grace. Grace with parenting, not guilt. It's such a mantra that is part of the Sense by Meg series. And what I always say when it comes to the feeding space and even breastfeeding, you know, and if you only get in it right to do 50% breastfeeding and you need to add formula. You know, then that's also where we because there is, there is something so powerful when a mom can just enjoy the time and it is hard. It's challenging, but it is beautiful and it is wonderful. And it is short lived. And I think with regards to the whole exercise space. You know, it is not forever. It's not forever. So your body is going to get stronger again, your core muscles will be strengthened. And you will have a time when you can go and do those hectic workouts again and run marathons, but now is the time to be gentle to your body and to your mind. I love what you say. "Okay. I'm good enough. I'm looking after myself well enough. I'm looking after my baby well enough." And I think that's...  
**Annéke de Silva:** Yeah. That's true.  
**[17:38 - 18:12]**  
**Kath Megaw:** Jump into your kind of a little bit into the breastfeeding and we'll kind of bring it together with the exercise just now again, but just your, 'cause your other qualification and passion is, is lactation and lactation consultant. So how does a mom tell in these early days, if her baby is getting enough breast milk? So the mom maybe is starting exercise and now we've said to her, breastfeeding and exercise doesn't actually affect your milk supply. So it would be helpful for mom to know, "Okay. So how do I measure if my baby's getting enough milk?"

**[18:13 - 19:49]**  
**Annéke de Silva:** I think the biggest advice, first tip of advice I would give moms is diaper outputs, making sure they have enough wet diapers per day. So if your baby still has, I can't remember the exact amount, if your baby still has enough wet diapers per day, then your baby is getting enough milk. Which makes sense. If you think about yourself, if you are dehydrated, you don't go to the loo very often. But if you are drinking enough water, you are going to the toilet often enough. That means you are hydrated. So the same with a baby. If they have enough wet diapers during the day, you know, they are getting enough. And if you are still a bit panicked and you have access to a scale, you can weigh them before, after a feed. That's really like, it's very nitty gritty. But if I know, you know, some moms do get that paranoid. But you can then weigh them before a feed, after a feed. Weigh them every day, make sure that they are gaining weight. So I would think those are the two biggest steps. Weighing one is not as easy because not everyone's got a scale for a baby at home. But just making sure they have enough wet diapers. You know, you might think, "Oh, they're drinking all the time because they're not getting milk." But it's actually just normal. Cluster feeding is normal. But if they've got enough wet diapers during the day, you are, the baby is getting enough milk. And if the baby's happy and thriving and awake and wanting to feed the whole time, it's a good thing.

**[19:50 - 20:54]**  
**Kath Megaw:** Especially in the early days. So you might want to have a baby in the early days. So definitely, yeah. We normally say about six to eight wet nappies a day, remembering that exclusively breastfed baby, they can have one stool in seven days or seven stools in one day. Also comfortable, but babies are going to be niggly. They're learning how to digest. So it's a new thing for them. So that isn't going to be there. So yeah and then gaining weight you know obviously if there's a struggle you can weigh more frequently otherwise once a week a clinic visit especially if you're a new mom and you're not 100% sure or you're having a moment wondering whether your milk supply is enough I totally agree have them weighed, check where they're growing and you'll be able to see that they are doing fine or you need some assistance or need to increase the milk supply. I also love what you said about cluster feeding and especially towards the end of the day how as the baby gets into a feeding rhythm how they just manage to know that they want to kind of stock up for the night ahead and hopefully to go for a longer stretch at night.

**[20:54 - 21:08]**  
**Annéke de Silva:** That's good it is so good it's so good and sometimes the babies would rather eat enough during the day so that they don't want that milk at night so if you're busy all day breastfeeding be happy because otherwise you have a reverse baby that wants to feed at night.

**[21:08 - 21:40]**  
**Kath Megaw:** Exactly, 100% and I think that's so helpful. So just going back to kind of the exercise phase because you're just such an amazing wealth of knowledge on that can working out or sweating I think you did allude to it but maybe just to clarify it, change the taste of breast milk or breastfeeding like the yeah probably the taste because there has been some concern it can sour the milk and because of the heat when you're heating up your body is that nonsense?

**[21:41 - 22:19]**  
**Annéke de Silva:** It's nonsense so it's really just the taste of your skin if you've been sweating that might put the baby off or if you stink because if you've got body odour you know babies are humans they're gonna smell "mommy does not smell very lekker" so rather go take a shower once you get home get that bra off immediately because the longer you are also in your very tight sports bra that can also lead to clogged ducts and we all know clogged ducts can lead to mastitis so that's also just another tip to throw in there get your bra off as quick as you can once you get home take a shower feed baby so you can get the breasts empty again.

**[22:19 - 22:36]**  
**Kath Megaw:** I love that so good and I think you really earlier on you spoke about the bras and the underwires and engorgement and all of that so obviously if a mom has mastitis which is infected milk ducts we definitely don't want them exercising just like you wouldn't exercise if you've got flu am I correct?

**[22:37 - 24:10]**  
**Annéke de Silva:** Yes so if you've got just if it's still the not beginning stages of mastitis but if you've got clogged ducts you can still manage that because that's something you try to get out and get rid of. I had a lot of clogged ducts with this last baby of mine and it was terrible like a clogged duct I don't think you can explain how sore a clogged duct is to someone unless they've had one so typically when you have a clogged duct you are very aware of it and it is difficult to put on a very tight sports bra then so if you have clogged ducts and you want to go exercise and you are okay to manage a tight sports bra for that little while you can do it just try to then maybe not do high impact exercises that irritates the breast where there's lots of movement and then again immediately when you get home out of that sports bra in a hot shower massage under the shower try to get that clogged duct out and if your baby's still feeding on you the babies usually also get that I found for me it worked easiest was hot shower massaging a lot where the clogged duct is towards the nipple and then feeding baby straight after or pumping straight after that usually helped a lot to get the clogged duct out but once you have mastitis which is like you said it's kind of like the flu you typically need antibiotics for it I would recommend to rest the body because your body is actually sick it's fighting an infection so if it is full-blown mastitis rather rest I don't think you're going to feel up to it anyway but rather rest and recover and try to get the mastitis recovered then you can return to exercise.

**[24:10 - 24:36]**  
**Kath Megaw:** So good this has been an amazing chat with you and we'll definitely have you back on because I think there's so much more to explore and thanks for all your amazing advice some really good practical tips that are manageable for parents maybe you can just tell parents where they can get hold of you and I know you're in the Joburg area but what how would they find you?  
**[24:36 - 25:15]**  
**Annéke de Silva:** Yeah so I am in in Midstream and Gauteng so the Centurion area you can go on my Instagram @glowfit\_pt so G L O W a lot of people only spell it G L O so @glowfit\_pt and you can find me on my website glowfittraining.co.za yeah and then you can contact me from there and yeah and any questions any whatever I do distance programmes as well so if you don't live in the area you can come in for classes I do zoom consultations or you know home programmes if you live elsewhere and then I just do it over zoom.  
**[25:15 - 25:44]**  
**Kath Megaw:** Technology is great you see. Oh that's so good to know I wasn't aware of that so that's very helpful moms so Glowfit with a W underscore PT that's how you find Annéke and on her website and she does both online consults and can work out a programme for you at home or you can contact her if you're in the Centurion area and want to join her studio. Um just a parting word one-liner for our moms out there.  
**[25:46 - 26:02]**  
**Annéke de Silva:** I think it's always going to be this and people who know me think I probably repeat myself a lot but grace, just have grace with yourself in this motherhood journey that's that's all I can say it gets easier this too shall pass and you are doing amazing.  
**[26:02 - 26:11]**  
**Kath Megaw:** I love that and yes we herald that at um the Sense by Meg podcast and I'm Kath Megaw and we look forward to speaking to you again thanks so much.  
**Annéke de Silva:** Thanks guys.  
**Kath Megaw:** Bye.