



Stroller Fit Mamas

Katy Moms and Kids Enjoy Fitness and Friendship

Written by Gabrielle Browne and Photos by Suzanne Box

It's a fact - moms do a lot. Between taking care of the home, work, kids, and various appointments, taking time for themselves is often put on the back burner. When life becomes a juggling act, many women put themselves last. But Katy-area moms have been able to lighten their loads by joining a group exercise class that enables them to bond with their children, make new friends, and exercise—all in an hour. Stroller Strides and StrollerFit are two exercise options for any Katy mom with a young child.

Felicia Kucera is owner of StrollerFit Katy, and she is also a certified instructor. Her classes are aimed at moms and kids. “The energy and movement in our fitness classes keeps the kids entertained and happy while parents enjoy a great full body workout,” she says.

Not Just a Walk in the Park

The goal of StrollerFit and Stroller Strides is to help moms make gains—not only in their fitness but in life in general. The only required equipment for both is a sturdy stroller, sunscreen, and water. The instructor will supply any other workout gear, although

StrollerFit participants' one-time registration fee includes necessary equipment.

Moms have also been known to come to the group without baby and enjoy the workout and each others' company. The Stroller Strides group meets six days a week at Cullen Park, Bear Creek Park, and Matzke Park in Cypress.

Ami Almquist, a mom of two and certified instructor, leads most Stroller Strides classes. “Stroller Strides is a total body workout. We don't just meet and walk in the park,” she says. Each class begins with a warm-up, and then the participants run or power walk from station to station in order to strength train in three-minute intervals, with some exercises including the use of a resistance band.

Stroller Strides and StrollerFit build friendships and provide support systems for moms of all abilities that most gyms can't offer. Most gyms do not allow children in the workout facility either. At these classes, children are welcome. “Our classes are a great workout that



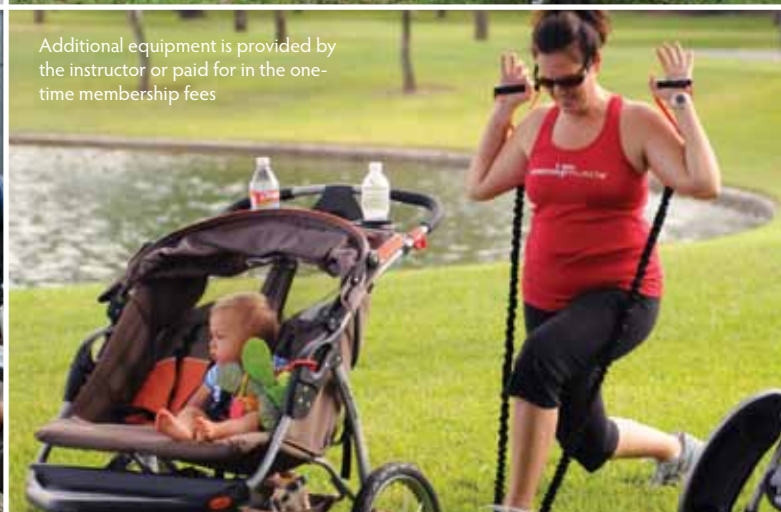
A sturdy stroller is required to participate in these classes



Ami Almquist is the instructor for Stroller Strides



Classes include a warm up, running or power walking, and strength training



Additional equipment is provided by the instructor or paid for in the one-time membership fees

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is appropriate for all fitness levels. We sing songs, count in foreign languages, and incorporate other interactive activities for your child,” says Kucera.

Teaching Healthy Habits

Working mom Kimberly Swicegood has been a Stroller Strides member for a little over a year, and she enjoys being able to exercise with her daughters. “The biggest reason I joined was because I wanted to get back in shape, but I didn’t want to feel guilty about spending more time away from my girls on the weekends or other days. Stroller Strides is the best of both worlds for me. Both girls get to go with me. We spend time together, and it gives Dad a break (he is a stay-at-home dad). I get a great workout outdoors, and it hopefully instills good habits in my girls,” she says.

StrollerFit offers moms similar benefits of working out with their children. In addition to stroller-based classes that meet at LaCenterra, Grand Lakes Park, and Katy Mills Mall, StrollerFit gives participants different class options. Kucera says, “This fall, we will begin three new class formats for moms. One is a group strength training session. We also offer Restore the Core—which is a mat Pilates-based workout that alleviates the postural changes and muscular imbalances that age, life, and pregnancy bring us. We also offer a mat-based yoga class for moms and tots.”

Other moms agree that being able to exercise in a challenging way with their children is a major benefit to being a part of this kind of group. Jennifer Sullivan has been a member of Stroller Strides for about two years. “The best thing is my two children are not staying in a play area at a local gym. They have lots of fun and so do I,” she says.

Erin Phillips agrees. “I have a son, Ryan, who is 20 months old. StrollerFit has changed both of our lives. Before we started going, we didn’t know anyone who had kids Ryan’s age and I was unhappy being a new stay-at-home mom with no one to socialize with. Socialization is so important for my son as well as for me. I also wanted to make sure Ryan grew up knowing the importance of physical fitness. StrollerFit allowed us to accomplish both of these goals. Ryan and I both look forward to going to class every day,” she says.

More Than Just Exercise

Because the participants find friendship and share common interests, both organizations have side groups. Stroller Strides hosts LUNA Moms Club, which is associated with LUNA nutritional products. This group is free to join, and it brings moms together for community service, playgroups, and fun nights out. Moms can join the club even if they do not exercise with Stroller Strides.

StrollerFriends is the social side of StrollerFit. Kucera explains, “There is no membership fee, and you do not have to be a StrollerFit member to attend the events. We have play dates, holiday parties, family events and Moms Night Out once a month.”
KM

GABRIELLE BROWNE enjoys strolls in the local parks with her husband and toddler son.

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More Info

Both Stroller Strides and StrollerFit meet Monday-Saturday around the Katy area. The first class is free for both groups. Katy moms looking for a challenging, fun, and baby-welcome workout should check these out



Stroller Strides

strollerstrides.net/houston

Their monthly membership includes unlimited classes at any Houston area location for \$50. Almquist explains, "If you can commit to three classes per week, it breaks down to \$3.80 per class." Various other packages are available as well.

Stroller Fit

strollerfit.com

There is a one-time enrollment fee of \$50, which includes all equipment, and various package options are offered, including some for working moms, weekends only, and individual class purchases.



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