

Study finds secret to lose baby weight after childbirth

New moms who returned to work soon after delivery, had childcare help, breastfed, and did not experience postpartum depression were the ones most able to lose the baby weight within 6 months of giving birth, according to a new research study.

"What some moms can do is increase their physical activity - even a ten minute walk with the baby each way to a neighbour's house. If physical activity can be incorporated into everyday tasks it becomes more doable."

Background

- The time period surrounding childbirth has been identified as a major influence on a woman's lifetime weight. In one of the largest studies ever performed on this topic, researchers from Simmons College looked beyond diet and exercise to uncover what really affects a new mom's weight.

The study of 692 women appears in the July/Aug/Sept issue of the journal *Topics in Clinical Nutrition*.

What worked

- *Going back to work early*

"Presumably, women that return to work after delivering a child do not have as many eating opportunities throughout the day as moms that are home. Women who are used to working outside of the home may be confronted with new eating situations now that they are at home for many hours during the day. Stay at home moms can use this information to be more vigilant against mindless eating, or eating out of boredom, stress or loneliness," said Ellen Slotkin, MS, RD, lead study author.

- *Childcare help*

The study also found that those moms who had help caring for their child were more able to lose the baby weight.

"Our subjects were better able to lose baby weight after delivery when they had childcare help. Many women fear being accused of being a bad mother if they seek out assistance in caring for their child. In fact, employing the help of others can only help new moms to better care for their family by allowing them to rest, exercise, or socialise for stress relief," said Slotkin.

"We recognise that not everyone can afford childcare help or have family available to help out," said Nancy Herbold, EdD, RD, study co-author. "What some moms can do is increase their physical activity - even a ten minute walk with the baby each way to a neighbour's house. If physical activity can be incorporated into everyday tasks it becomes more doable," said Herbold.

- *Breastfeeding*

Breastfeeding increases a new mom's calorie requirements by up to 300 to 500 calories per day. New

moms do not need to feel that they need to choose between breastfeeding and returning to work. "Employment policies today are generally more supportive of breastfeeding. Some areas even have legal protections surrounding this," said Slotkin

Source: Topics in Clinical Nutrition

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