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## Can babies improve their mothers' attachment and eating attitudes?

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Postpartum weight changes may impact mothers' body image and relating to the newborn may influence attachment style. We examined the association between maternal attachment and body image during the year following birth. 195 mothers who gave birth at an Israeli hospital between 2008 and 2012 participated in the study. Their BMI and their babies' BMI were recorded two days (Time 1) and one year (Time 2) postpartum. Mothers completed measures of attachment style, body image, eating attitudes and feeding practices at Times 1 and 2. Groups of mothers with common attachment characteristics were identified using cluster analysis: (Group A) Secure-stable: Mothers with secure attachment at both points in time; (Group B) Insecure-worsened: Mothers with insecure attachment at Time 1 and even more insecure attachment at Time 2; (Group C) Insecure-improved: Mothers with insecure attachment at Time 1 that had improved at Time 2. Mothers' BMI, body image and eating attitudes and baby's BMI were compared across these groups during the postpartum year. Eating attitudes remained stable in Group A, deteriorated in Group B and improved in Group C. Significant group X time interaction was observed for baby's BMI with appropriate weight gain in the babies of Groups A and C but excessive weight gain in babies of Group B. Results highlight a subgroup of mothers with insecure attachment immediately after giving birth, whose attachment styles and eating attitudes improve postpartum. For these women, taking care of their baby is associated with an improvement in their attachment style and eating attitudes.

### Biography

Rachel Bachner-Melman is a Clinical Psychologist specializing in the research and treatment of eating disorders, other psychopathology and positive psychology. She is a Senior Lecturer in the MA Clinical Psychology Programs of the Ruppin Academic Center and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She has published over 60 articles and book chapters and is active in the leadership of the Academy for Eating Disorders and the Israel Association for Eating Disorders, of which she is President Elect.

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