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Eating frequency and lactation in relation to changes in body weight and body fat during the first 12 months postpartum: A prospective observational study

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Introduction: There are many factors that are related to postpartum weight retention such as pre-pregnancy weight, breastfeeding, physical activity level (PAL) and total energy intake (EI). Studies investigating maternal eating frequency (EF) postpartum and its relation to body weight (BW) and body fat (BF) are limited.

Objectives: To examine if there are relationships between maternal EF, lactation and changes in BW and BF from 2 weeks to 12 months postpartum. And to investigate if there is a difference in maternal EF in relation to lactation behavior, or changes over time in BW, BF, body mass index (BMI), PAL, EF and EI depending on lactation duration.

Methods: 83 postpartum healthy women (25-40 years) from Gothenburg were included. Study visits were at 2 weeks, 4 months and 12 months postpartum. At each time points, BW and BF were measured and data from four-day diet records were used to determine EF at each time point. Women were also classified in accordance with their lactation behavior and duration at 4 months postpartum.

Results: There was a significant increase in BW from estimated pre-pregnancy BW to 4 months postpartum within all lactation duration groups. A significant reduction in BW, BF and a significant increase in PAL was shown from 2 weeks to 12 months postpartum only among those who breastfed longer than 4 months. EI was higher at 4 and 12 months postpartum, among those who breastfed longer than 4 months. There were no significant relationships between EF at 4 and 12 months postpartum, respectively and changes in BW and BF. There were significant positive relationships between EF and EI both at 4 and 12 months postpartum. EF at 4 months postpartum was significantly higher in the full breastfeeding group compared to the no breastfeeding group.

Conclusion: Changes in BW and BF postpartum are related to factors such as lactation behavior and duration, PAL and total EI, but the relation to maternal EF is still unclear.

Biography

Aisha Almulla has completed her Bachelor's and Master's degree from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden in Clinical Nutrition and Dietetic field. She is a Registered Dietitian working in Tawam Hospital in the Community Nutrition Department dealing with patients and conducting researches in the nutrition field. She is a Member in the American Society for Nutrition and the Swedish Association of Clinical Dietitians and the United Arab Emirates Nutrition Group.

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