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Dutch multipara and their experiences of longer term postpartum health: results of a qualitative study

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BACKGROUND & AIM

- Pregnancy and birth cause many changes in the female body that may influence future maternal health.
- So far, studies focused on maternal physical and mental health effects up to one year postpartum.
- The aim of our qualitative study was to examine the impact on long-term physical and mental health in multipara specifically
- **Question: How do low-risk multipara experienced the influence of pregnancy and birth on their physical and mental health two to five years postpartum?**

METHODS

- **Semi-structured in-depth interviews**
- **2-5 years postpartum**
- **11 low-risk multiparas had:**
- **27 live births**
- **24 vaginal births**
- **1 elective cesarean**
- **2 emergency cesaerean**

Participants were interviewed about their postpartum health and information received regarding postpartum care and recovery

RESULTS

- **Overall, women experienced good longer term physical and mental health.**
- Diminished physical health was reported regarding physical appearance, pelvic complaints and reduced functioning of pelvic floor and abdominal muscles
- Participants considered the transition to parenthood and family life as the greatest influence on their mental health. Nonetheless, woman mainly considered this transition to parenthood.
- Women felt **insufficiently informed** about the transition to parenthood
- Woman felt **insufficiently informed** about recovery from pregnancy and birth postpartum. As a result, they trivialized their complaints instead of seeking help, leading to some complaints still existing two to five years postpartum.



CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the **need of women for more assistance in postpartum period** to improve their physical and mental health in the longer term.



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Student Midwife
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