
Main barriers to participation in postnatal physical activity and exercise

Potential benefits of PA in postpartum for mother and child

Effects of PA on the sexual function among postpartum



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The postpartum period has been termed the “**fourth stage of labor**”.

The postpartum period is an important time of transition and engaging in physical activity can be challenging for many women. During past decades, many research studies have illustrated the important advantages of physical activity during and after pregnancy for mothers and their children.



Benefits of PA

- Regular physical activity during this time can positively improve one's **psychological state**, as well as improve one's **physical health** such as weight management.
- It helps strengthen and tone abdominal muscles.
- It boosts energy.
- It may help prevent postpartum depression.
- It promotes better sleep.
- It improves **sexual function**.
- It relieves stress.
- It can help you lose the extra weight that you may have gained during pregnancy.

- **In Iran**

79.6% of women in postpartum do not follow any PA programs.

Among 21.4% of active women, 18.2% of them perform the mild intensity and 2.2% conducted moderate intensity.

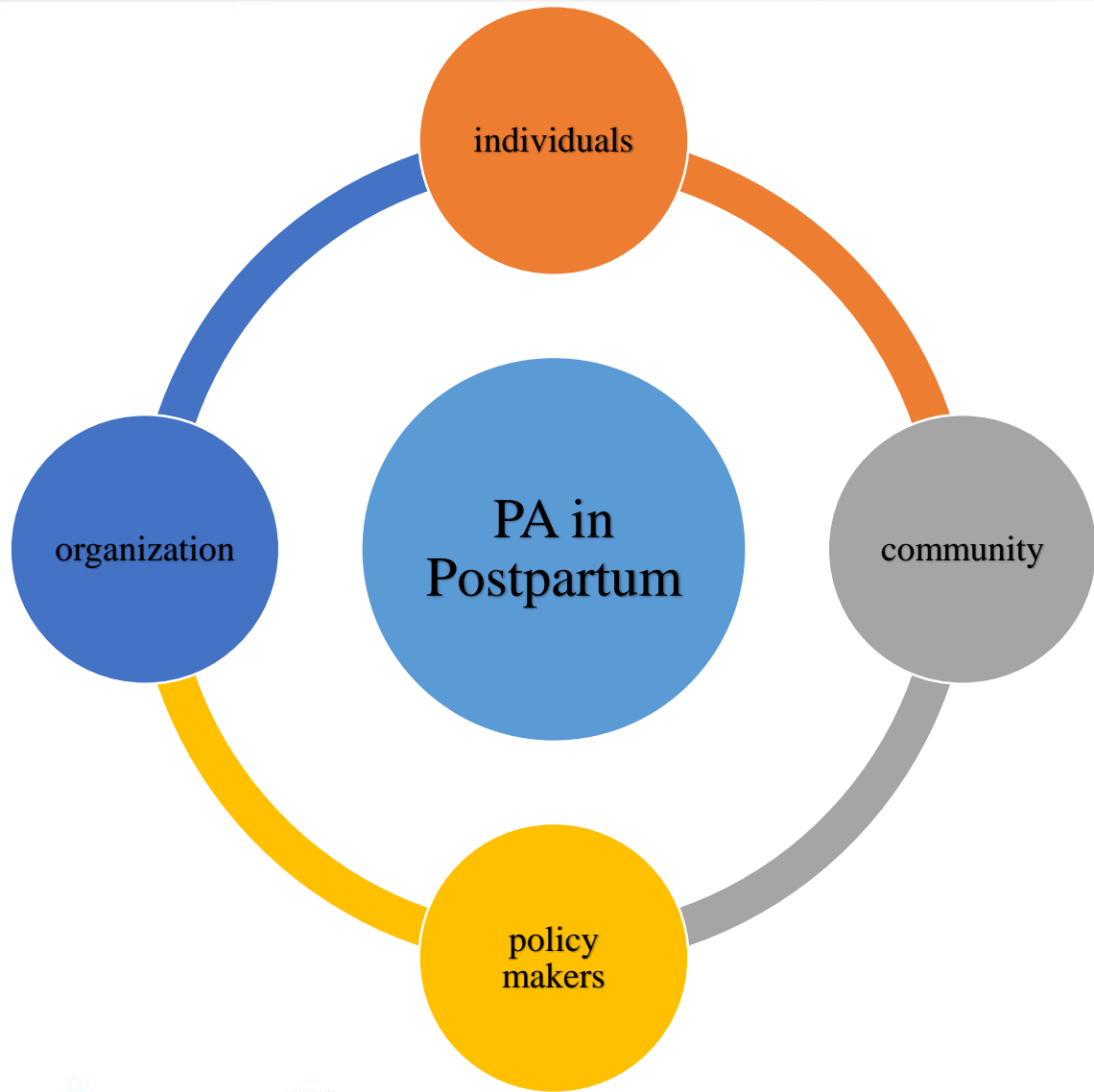
PA levels is associated with several benefits during postpartum.

So, why don't the women willingness to participate in PA?

Overcoming Barriers to Physical Activity



*Socio-ecological
model for postnatal
PA*



Barriers

- More than 89% of the women **believed** physical activity and exercise were a proper decision at 3 months postpartum.
- **Lack of time**
- **child care issues**
- **being too tired**
- **health issues such as depression**
- **eagerness to feel better and**
- **partner support**

Evenson et al. (2009)

- the postpartum period was a great opportunity for getting involved in physical activity, not only for themselves, but also, they liked to be **role models for their children**.
- Moreover, , it seems that **health care professionals** have an important role in encouraging women in postpartum physical activity.

Ekelin et al. (2018)

These include lack of time, support and motivation; family responsibilities; cost barriers; breastfeeding concerns and unrealistic expectations

social media: Media advertisements of what bodies look like in the postpartum period was another source of pressure or judgement which had a negative influence on women's body image.

In addition, the nuances of the postpartum experience have not been well addressed by health care providers or by traditional sources of information.



Cultural differences in postpartum activity

- Many variations in postpartum practices can be spotted among people with different cultural backgrounds. The source of some traditional practices may stem from religions or may sometimes be called supernatural (Dennis et al, 2007).
- In Iran: 40 days rest is recommended 😊
- Due to a great number of people who immigrate to European and North American countries, we also can see these beliefs and practices in these countries

- **Women's bodies as a social construct**

social and cultural norms

- **Women's bodies and medical discourses**

“sick” and “need of repair”

Facilitators

- The first theme- *boost our body, lift our mind*- indicates the importance of supporting the women's beliefs and values regarding the postpartum physical activity.
- Partners, family members, and health care professionals should be aware of the social discourses that inform mothers' subjectivities.

- Awareness:

Kila (2019) in a research study in Nepal found that an educational workshop was effective in helping young mothers to resist harmful social norms. Some mothers participated in the workshop with their partners and sister-in laws, and recognized its usefulness.

Moreover, health care professionals can use different approaches to promote postpartum physical activity.

Bashirian, Ouji, and Afshari (2019):

Educational interventions were effective in promoting the postpartum physical activity.

Findings showed this intervention was effective in promoting postpartum physical activity.

- In order to help women's voices to be heard **social media** can be used. Social media can connect a large number of people together, and it has unpredictable and huge effects on society.
- In addition, social media such as television or internet can help mothers, family members, and health care professionals to start special campaigns in order to emphasize physical activity.

- health care professionals should establish a relationship with mothers, be good listeners, and provide a safe space in which mothers can talk about their beliefs, values, worries, and concerns regarding postpartum body weight, without any fear of judgement or prejudice, and improve their body image.



Saligheh et al. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* (2016) 16:131
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BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Open Access

Perceived barriers and enablers of physical activity in postpartum women: a qualitative approach



Maryam Saligheh^{1,3*}, Beverley McNamara¹ and Rosanna Rooney²

Barriers to PA can be divided into environmental and personal factors

Personal factors are those related to the mothers' own circumstances, such as income and the number of children under her care. They also include lack of child care and exercise partners, and other social support factors, including negative family attitudes.

Environmental factors are those which are outside of the mothers' personal control and direct experience. These include access to public transport, access to recreational facilities, neighborhood safety and lack of an informative health system.

Postpartum exercise enablers following childbirth

- Partner support

‘the most reliable source of support’

- Social support

share their experience and to create opportunities to be physically active

- Postnatal exercise classes

it as very affordable and a place to meet other mothers and share their motherhood journey. Identifying achievable goals and setting a standard achievable program were the key elements in enabling women to exercise.

HEJ

Article

Factors influencing physical activity among postpartum Iranian women

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to determine the factors that influence PA among postpartum women in Iran using an extended version of the transtheoretical model incorporating past behaviour.

In this study, **self-efficacy** was the strongest predictor of the stage of PA behavioural change.

Past behaviour was the second most important factor in predicting PA.

That said, mothers' activity in the present study was less than 150 minutes per week, which is lower than recommended guidelines.

Potential benefits of PA in postpartum for mother's well-being and interaction with the baby

The short-term benefits of postpartum physical activity and exercise:

improvement in mood

cardiorespiratory fitness

promotion of weight loss

reduction the depression and anxiety.

The improvement of other fitness

components and posture

reduction of fatigue and urinary incontinence

are other health issues



Postpartum **mood imbalance**, also called “baby blues” or serious mental disorders including postpartum depression can have detrimental effects on both a mother's physical and mental health and on her child's growth and emotional development





Journal of Affective Disorders

Volume 228, 1 March 2018, Pages 143-152



Review article

Effect of maternal postpartum depression on offspring's growth

Simone Farías-Antúnez  , Mariana Otero Xavier, Iná Silva Santos

- Maternal depression affects mainly child's first-year growth.
- Children of depressed mothers are more likely to be underweight and stunted.
- Maternal depression is associated with child's height impairment after the first year.

- **PPD** symptoms include either depressed mood, loss of appetite, insomnia; or weight gain and excessive sleeping.
- Untreated maternal depression can cause an impact on parenting abilities such as increased hostility, negative interactions, less responsiveness and communication resulting in an impaired competence as a caregiver.
- **PPD** can also interfere with childcare activities like duration of breastfeeding, sleeping routine, health care, early introduction of solid food and physical activity stimulation that can affect child growth.

- Children of depressed mothers have been related to higher risks of stunting and underweight in developing countries; however, chronic exposure to maternal depression has also been associated with a higher risk of overweight and obesity during childhood and adolescence.


So,

- Maternal depression showed an effect on offspring's weight and height impaired growth during the first year of the child's life and continued linear growth deficit until the age of five. Effects on overweight and obesity were inconsistent.



Article

The Relationship between Maternal Functioning and Mental Health after Childbirth in Iranian Women

Sevda Gholizadeh Shamasbi ¹, Jennifer L. Barkin ², Solmaz Ghanbari-Homayi ³,
Ommibanin Eyvazzadeh ¹ and Mojgan Mirghafourvand ^{4,*} 

- Maternal functioning during the postpartum period is a multidimensional concept that includes personal care, infant and family care, and social and occupational activities.
- Factors that may affect maternal functioning during the postpartum period in the general population include parity, labor experience, delivery type, receiving or not receiving social support, postpartum psychological status, and maternal and neonatal complications.

- Postpartum maternal functioning and infant-related tasks act as important factors for the infant's growth and development in the first year of life.
- In addition, mothers must integrate their new responsibilities related to infant care into their existing set of duties/activities; reprioritization is often a necessity (and healthy) for new mothers.

- Major health problems during prenatal and postnatal periods occur in 1 out of every 3–5 women in developing countries and in 1 out of every 10 women in developed countries.
- Maternal functioning plays a key role in the development, health, and support of the child; therefore, in the postpartum period, maternal functioning may be impaired and affected by maternal emotions and feelings.

PA and sexual function in postpartum

outcomes of an experimental project

- **Effect of eight weeks of combined exercises (High intensity interval training and Yoga) on the serum Estradiol and sexual function in postpartum**

Shojaeian and Shokrani, 2019

- A randomized clinical trial
- 20 women who were selected and divided in two experimental and control groups
- Eligibility criteria were being primiparous or second-born, being in lactation period, without specific illness, have a healthy baby, without complications of preterm labour and postpartum depression, no smoking and alcohol or drugs, lack of regular postpartum exercise, normal pre-pregnancy BMI, score of less than 26.5 in the sexual function based on the Sexual Function and Sexual Schema Questionnaire (FSFI).

- Our intervention: warm-up, stretching exercises, yoga exercises to strengthen and stretch muscles, especially the lower limbs and pelvis; as well as several jumping movements.
- The **HIIT exercise** was the 40m sprint (30 min rest- 4times repetition in the first week to 7 times in the last week).
- There was no significant difference in the estradiol serum before the intervention ($p=0.191$), but there was a significant difference ($p=0.004$) after intervention.
- Moreover, the results of female sexual function index (FSFI) and sexual schema index showed the effect of combined exercises on improving FSFI ($p=0.0005$) and sexual schema ($p=0.033$) of postpartum women.

- The results of study supported the effect of eight weeks of combined exercise on serum estradiol levels and postpartum women's sexual function. Based on the importance of sexual function in the life, it is necessary to find and perform the effective and low cost strategies for improving the sexual function.

- Generally, exercise training can alter the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis by affecting gonadotropin secretion and structural indexes of the anterior pituitary gonadotropes.
- Therefore, they activate the enzymes effective in the production of estradiol from the ovary, and as a result, it leads to the production and increase of estradiol.
- The effect of physical activities is not only hormonal changes, but also behavioral improvements, for example, improving the quality of life and sexual function in postpartum period.