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Patterns of body weight change and lifestyle factors in women after childbirth

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Weight gain during pregnancy is one of the profound and common changes in women's body which could cause obesity, metabolic diseases or psychological problems later if not managed properly. Particularly in Korea, trends of marriage and childbirth at late age, cultural custom of Sanhujori (postpartum care) and westernized lifestyles are considered to be threats to weight control. The study aimed to identify the patterns of body weight changes through pregnancy and postpartum and the related characteristics in women who were within 12 months after childbirth. A descriptive study with a cross-sectional design was conducted with 103 Korean women by online survey recruitment. A structured questionnaire for electronic self-administration was formatted to include demographics, obstetrical history, body weights at 6 time points, instruments of International Physical Activity Questionnaire and Eating Habit Measurement. Invitation to the study was distributed by a professional survey agency. Women were 34.1 years old in average, 48% of housewives, highly educated, 73% of primiparas and 82% of breastfed mothers. The BMIs were ranged from 17.3 to 27.8 indicating 21.5% of overweight and obese women. Mean body weight increased during pregnancy was 11.5 kg (± 4.79), however 26% showed weight gain more than 13 kg and 3.2 kg (± 4.19 , range-6~17 kg) was still remained. Women wanted to lose 5.5 kg (range 3~20 kg) more while 45% and 71% women have not tried diet or exercise respectively. Body weight variables were not related to women's characteristics, scores of physical activity and diet. In addition physical activity and diet did not significantly differ by BMI groups. Prolonged retained body weight, wish to weight loss and poor physical activity require integrative approaches for women to ensure healthy transition to lives after reproductive periods. Excessive weight gain during pregnancy needs careful monitoring in antenatal care considering increasing population with high BMIs. Future longitudinal study is necessary to identify more accurate pictures and related variables of postpartum weight management.

Biography

Chae Weon Chung has completed her PhD from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. She is a Professor at the College of Nursing and a Researcher at the Research Institute of Nursing Science at Seoul National University. Her research interest is in women's health. She has published more than 70 papers in journals and has been serving as an Editorial Board Member and a Reviewer of repute.

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