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## **A qualitative study examining the impact of pregnancy and childbirth on women's health-related attitudes and beliefs one year after delivery**

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**Background/Aim:** Motherhood is perceived as a time of transition into a new role that brings health changes that affect women's lifestyle like diet and physical activity behaviors. There is limited information on how women experience lifestyle changes due to pregnancy and the transition to motherhood, with a focus on diet and physical activity. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine women's health-related attitudes and beliefs one year after delivery, focusing on pregnancy- and childbirth-related changes in dietary behaviors and physical activity.

**Methods/Results:** As part of a prospective longitudinal study, 24 pregnant women were selected from the HPL study population and interviewed face-to-face one year after delivery. Semistructured interview topics included (i) subjective concept of health, (ii) feelings about lifestyle and health behavior changes focusing diet and physical behavior, and (iii) stresses and resources that influence personal lifestyle/health behaviors. After obtaining informed consent, all interviews were recorded. A systematic thematic content analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes. Among the well-educated participants aged 23-42 years, 17 were first-time mothers. Analysis of the data revealed overarching themes such as conscious reflection on one's own health needs and its implementation in everyday life through family and external support services. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Medical University of Graz (EC No. 26-066 ex 13/14), and all participants gave informed consent.

**Conclusion:** Analysis of mostly well-educated Austrian mothers living in couples revealed that the transition to motherhood represents a turning point for lifestyle change. Furthermore, the results indicate that individual health support is needed to address self-care, physiological changes, stress, and negative emotions of motherhood.