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Three to six months to lose weight gained in pregnancy
is normal

Women are under too much pressure to lose weight quickly after giving birth, according to German Institute

Cologne, 19 June 2009. Once the baby arrives, many new mothers want to return to their former weight quickly – just like film stars who appear in the media in bikinis just weeks after giving birth. But according to the German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG), women should not put themselves under too much pressure straight away. In information published today on Informed Health Online (URL: <http://www.informedhealthonline.org>) , the Institute also warns that overdoing early weight loss attempts could have a negative impact on breastfeeding.

Kilos often melt away by themselves – but there is no guarantee

Gaining weight in pregnancy is not only normal, it is necessary. The mother's body has to nourish the growing baby. Her body needs to take on more fluid to support the extra circulation the placenta and baby need. Some of this added weight will usually be lost as soon as the baby is born. "Often, the extra effort women have to make to look after a new baby and breastfeed after giving birth means the kilos just melt away without effort," according to the Institute's Director, Professor Peter Sawicki. "But for about half of all women, the weight will not go away as quickly."

"Eating for two" in pregnancy can cause problems if you are overweight

The Institute analysed recent evidence and new US national guidelines on weight gain in pregnancy, and the message is clear: women who have become overweight or more overweight during pregnancy have a higher chance of ongoing weight problems if they are not back to a normal weight within six months or a year after having a baby.

"Avoiding weight problems after birth means already being careful about balanced and healthy eating during pregnancy," says Professor Sawicki. "It is not a good idea to 'eat for two' in pregnancy and forget about your weight until after the baby is born if you are at all overweight – or prone to overweight – already. Women need to eat well enough for themselves and their baby, but pregnancy is not a time to overeat."

A lot of exercise in the weeks after birth will not necessarily help

Even though many magazines have "get your bikini body back quickly" diets on their covers, promising women they can achieve their ideal weight in time for summer, it is not getting quick results that counts the most. This is particularly true after pregnancy. It is normal for it to take three to six months for women to lose the weight they gained in pregnancy.

Exercise is important when people are overweight, but after pregnancy, a lot of exercise does not necessarily help a great deal. The Institute summarised the research evidence about the best ways to lose weight after childbirth. The evidence shows that a balanced diet helps – with or without extra exercise. Very strenuous exercise programmes soon after childbirth did not lead to extra weight loss. This means that women do not need to have a bad conscience if they take it easy in the busy weeks after giving birth. However, Professor Sawicki stresses that even though the birth of a baby can throw life completely out of kilter, it is important for women not to leave it too long before they start looking after themselves again.

Today the Institute published information based on the latest evidence and guidelines about healthy weight gain during pregnancy. The Institute's website, www.informedhealthonline.org (URL: <http://www.informedhealthonline.org>) , provides the public with easy-to-understand information about current medical developments and research on important health issues. If you would like to be kept up-to-date with the latest publications on the independent health information website, you can subscribe to the [informedhealthonline.org](http://www.informedhealthonline.org) newsletter (URL: <http://www.informedhealthonline.org/index.69.en.html>) .

Information:

Weight loss: What are the best ways to lose the extra weight gained in pregnancy? (URL: <http://www.informedhealthonline.org/index.517.en.html>)

Fact sheet: Weight gain in pregnancy (URL: <http://www.informedhealthonline.org/index.518.en.html>)

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Sources

The German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG)

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Evidence basis of our health information

Our information is based primarily on systematic reviews of the effects of health care. Systematic reviews are necessary to gain an objective picture of health care. In order to do this, a clear question is formulated. Researchers then find all the relevant studies that could answer this question. They then evaluate those studies.

You can find a list of the evidence and other scientific literature on which this information is based at **www.informedhealthonline.org**

Disclaimer

This information was prepared and published by the German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG). It is based on the evidence and other scientific literature available at the time of publication. The information is intended for the use of patients in Germany. It is not intended to for use to diagnose illnesses and the information is not intended to substitute for medical advice.