

SLEEP DURATION IN THE EARLY POSTPARTUM: AGE AND ETHNICITY MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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Introduction: Postpartum changes to normal sleep duration are experienced by almost all mothers. Sleep changes at this time have been linked with poorer postpartum mood, which can interfere with the development of an optimal mother-child relationship, and also with the onset of life-long poor sleep patterns. Maternal age at childbirth may have an association with sleep duration, with younger mothers tending towards longer total sleep. Average age of parturition may also vary between ethnic groups.

Methods: The E Moe Māmā, Sleep and Health in Aotearoa/New Zealand study (n=1,189) surveyed a community sample of women during the third trimester of pregnancy, at 4-6 weeks and 12 weeks postpartum. Sleep duration data, from a brief telephone survey conducted at 4-6 weeks postpartum, are presented (n=1,010). Women needed to be 16 years or older to participate (range 16-46 years). Equal numbers of Māori and non-Māori were sought in recruitment, and 36% of women in final sample identified as Māori. Women were asked about their total sleep time (TST) in the 24-hours preceding the telephone call.

Results: Mean TST for Māori was 7.73 hours (range 2-16 hours), and for non-Māori mean TST was 7.51 hours (range 3-17). On average, Māori women were significantly younger than non-Māori women (Māori 27.9 years versus non-Māori 31.9 years, $t(986) p < .0001$). Approximately 30% of both groups reported TST of ≤ 6 hours. Longer sleepers (>9 hours TST) were twice as likely to be Māori (18%) than non-Māori (10%), $\chi^2(2) = 12.6, p = .002$.

Conclusion: Given the range of maternal age in this community sample, both age and ethnicity should be considered in any studies investigating sleep duration in peripartum women.

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