

NEW STUDY: MOTHERS WHO WORK FULL-TIME ARE HEALTHIER



According to a new study released by researchers from Penn State University and the University of Akron, mothers who have full-time jobs tend to say that they are in better physical and mental health than those who stay-at-home or those who work only part-time. The study also found that mothers who return to work soon after giving birth have more mobility, energy and suffer less bouts of depression at the age of 40. "Work is good for your health, both mentally and physically. It gives women a sense of purpose, self-efficacy, control and autonomy. They have a place where they are an expert on something, and they're paid a wage," said study author Adrienne Frech. Frech is an assistant sociology professor. "If women can make good choices before their first pregnancy, they likely will be better off health-wise later. Examples of good choices could be delaying your first birth until you're married and done with your education, or not waiting a long time before returning to the workforce." Those working on the study said that mothers who work full-time benefit from the work for a variety of reasons. Those reasons include making more money, having better job security, having more chances for a promotion and having more benefits on the job than those who work part-time. The study took place from 1978 to 1995 and surveyed 2,540 women who became mothers during that timeframe. The study also showed that women who are 'persistently unemployed' had reported the most issues with their health. These women drop in and out of the workforce, most of the time not by their own choosing. "Struggling to hold onto a job or being in constant job-search mode wears on their health, especially mentally, but also physically," Frech said. "Women with interrupted employment face more job-related barriers than other women, or cumulative disadvantages over time." The researchers who worked on the study said that young women need to complete their academic careers and work for a little bit before they have a child. "Don't let critical life transitions like marriage and parenthood mean that you invest any less in your education and work aspirations, because women are the ones who end up making more trade-offs for family," Frech said. "Work makes you healthier. You will have the opportunity to save a nest egg. Also, should a divorce happen, it is harder to enter the workforce if you don't have a solid work history. Don't give up on work and education." Taken into account during the study were factors such as pre-pregnancy employment, marital status, race/ethnicity and prior health issues present when the women had their first baby. Also taken into account was the woman's age.