

Publication

An assessment of hair cortisol among postpartum Brazilian mothers and infants from a high-risk community in São Paulo : intra-individual stability and association in mother-infant dyads

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This study examined maternal-infant synchrony of hair cortisol at 12 months after birth and the intra-individual stability of maternal hair cortisol in the postpartum period. Participants were selected from an ongoing São Paulo birth cohort project, where families are considered to be "high-risk" due to their chronic stress experiences, with the majority living in slums (favelas). Cortisol was collected through 3-cm segments of hair samples, with values representing approximate levels of cortisol from 9 to 12 months for mothers and children and 6 to 12 months for mothers. Maternal and infant cortisol values reflecting chronic stress 9-12 months after birth were highly correlated ($r = .61$, $p < .001$); earlier maternal cortisol levels (6-9 months) and child cortisol levels at 9-12 months ($r = .51$, $p < .001$) were also correlated. Maternal cortisol values showed stability over time ($r = .79$, $p < .001$). These maternal-infant correlations are high compared to the existing literature on hair cortisol in other mother-child dyads, suggesting stronger synchrony under high-risk contexts where families are faced with challenging circumstances.

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