

# Baby bliss?

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The baby and toddler phase is not necessarily the happiest time in life. Satisfaction with life and one's relationship can deteriorate for most new mothers. However, those who are satisfied with their relationship during pregnancy are most satisfied three years later.

This comes from a recent study from the Norwegian Institute of [Public Health](#). The study includes 60,000 Norwegian women with small children.

"In this study we have investigated two types of satisfaction - satisfaction with the partner and general satisfaction with life - both during pregnancy and later in infancy and toddlerhood," says researcher Ragnhild Bang Nes.

- General satisfaction with life increased in the first months after birth and peaked when the child reached 6 months old. After 6 months, satisfaction with life decreased and reached a low point when the child was 3 years old.
- Satisfaction with the partner is of great importance for how mothers experience their life during this period, and satisfaction with the relationship during pregnancy is related to the mothers' overall satisfaction 3.5 years later.
- However, the researchers found a general decline in both types of satisfaction over time during infancy and toddlerhood. Even in

late pregnancy there was a decrease in relationship satisfaction, which continued to deteriorate throughout the study period until it reached an absolute low point at the last study date 3 years after birth.

"Long term, satisfaction with the relationship affects satisfaction with life to a greater degree than vice versa," said Bang Nes, who also stressed that the results suggest that the link between relationship satisfaction and overall satisfaction changes over time.

- Satisfaction with the [relationship](#) appears to be particularly important for satisfaction with life during [pregnancy](#) and after birth.
- During the toddler period, it appears that both forms of satisfaction influence each other more evenly.

Most Norwegian women are content

Compared with many other groups that have been studied previously, it seems that Norwegian women are relatively happy in this period of life.

"It is possible that the good welfare system in Norway contributes to ease the challenges during this phase. However, this has not been specifically studied here," said Bang Nes.

"Most adults want to have children. Children are seen as a blessing, an enrichment and a central source of meaning, love and belonging. One would therefore expect that having a child meets both the desire and satisfies a fundamental need, which in turn creates happiness and satisfaction. However, studies show that this is not always the case. This is often called the 'paradox of parental life'" explains Bang Nes.

Provided by Norwegian Institute of Public Health

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