

Early postnatal anal incontinence experience: An existential phenomenological study

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Postnatal anal incontinence

- What is postnatal anal incontinence?
- How many women experience postnatal anal incontinence after delivery?
- What causes postnatal anal incontinence?
- What are the consequences of having postnatal anal incontinence?

Research Question:

What is the lived experience of having anal incontinence in the early (less than 12 months) postnatal period following a vaginal delivery?

The methodology

- Phenomenology
- Existential Phenomenology

Steps of the analysis

Descriptive phenomenological analysis following the steps described by Giorgi (2009)

- Step 1: Breaking down the transcript into meaning units
- Step 2: Re-write the meaning units in the third person
- Step 3: Transform the meaning units
- Final step: Produce the essential structure

Embodied interpretation following the framework presented by Galvin & Todres (2013)

Transcript	Step one	Step two	Step 3
I was a bit worried that that might because yeah I was sort of worried that that might not get better that erm...that you know that I might be you don't know how long your gonna be, but because you because you don't have control of the wind so you think, if I don't have control over that did I you know and I, I did make it in time but am I going to make it in time next time, erm so you know I sort of worry that you know maybe you are just going to start soiling yourself in public sort of thing.	I was a bit worried that that might because yeah I was sort of worried that that might not get better that erm.../ that you know that I might be you don't know how long your gonna be,/ but because you because you don't have control of the wind so you think, if I don't have control over that did I you know and I, I did make it in time but am I going to make it in time next time,/ erm so you know I sort of worry that you know maybe you are just going to start soiling yourself in public sort of thing./	P2 states that she was a bit worried that it might not get better P2 states that she didn't know how long she would be (in the toilet) P2 states that because she didn't have control of the wind, she thought if she didn't have control over that, she did make it in time (to the toilet) but was she going to make it next time P2 states that she was worried that she was going to start soiling herself in public	P2 was worried that the faecal urgency might not resolve P2 didn't know how long it would take to empty her bowels Although P2 had made it to the toilet in time, because she didn't have control of the faecal incontinence she wondered if she would make it to the toilet the next time P2 was worried that she would start to get faecal incontinence in public

Results

The essential structure

The experience of early postnatal anal incontinence for three postpartum women involves coming to terms with a body that has changed in an unexpected way, that at times cannot be controlled or predicted, which interferes with the new role of mother and previous roles with others, such as partner and friend. These changes encompass much emotional engagement. Participants are anxious about the uncertainty of their body, how they might manage it and how it may influence their future. Participants symptoms can cause them embarrassment, or fear of embarrassment, particularly in public situations, and there can be a reluctance to disclose the problem to others. Participants have an overriding instinct to put the needs of the baby first, regardless of the consequence for themselves. The women begin to develop familiarity with their new body and role of motherhood and are (more or less) hopeful with the possibility of recovery.

The Key Constituents

- The changed bodily experience
- Emotional engagement
- Maternal instinct of 'baby comes first'
- Becoming familiar with the postnatal bodily self
- Sense of hope
- The evolving sense of a new self

Embodied interpretation: A poem

