

# Social Taboos Among Women Related To Food and Feeding Practices in Pregnancy

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## Abstract

Social taboos and traditional beliefs in food habits are still prevalent with a large majority of the population who are illiterate or ignorant regard the nutritive value of foods; these beliefs influence profoundly the pattern of food.

Pregnant women lactating mothers infants and children are particularly worse hit of these taboos leading to various morbid conditions in the society. These exemplified by low birth babies, premature births, nutritional anaemia, prenatal mortality, maternal mortality, kwashiorkor and marasmus. The present study was carried out with the objective to study the extent of involvement of social food taboos and there reasons in nutrition of pregnant women.

It was found that some food like tea, ginger, Rataloo, egg, pulses, pickles and vinegar are mostly avoided by women during pregnancy. They concluded that these foods produce undesirable effect on foetus. Whenever carrot, reddish, green leafy vegetables, milk with saffron, gola-mishri, orange, mixture of milk and ghee are included due to various reasons like gold-mishri, milk-kesar, orange potentiate fairness in the new born.

**Keywords:** Pregnancy Food Taboos, Mal Nutrition

## Introduction

The traditional practices are time honoured rituals and beliefs which are prevalent in a community. A complex network of belief and traditions both ancient and modern determines the foods that people will eat or not eat at any given time.

There are many food fads and taboos related to pregnancy. Food avoidance reflects mother's conscious choice not to consume certain food during pregnancy.

Rau Paravati mentioned that pregnant women were restricted both quantitatively and qualitatively. Thus precipitating or aggravating various nutritional deficiencies.

Many people believe that food is endowed with specific qualities that can influence the personality of unborn child or that can make him physically.

Thus some food in particular may be taboo in pregnancy.

## Importance of Study

Taboos and superstitions may interfere with adequate food intake especially by vulnerable groups. Women in developing countries suffer from nutritional deficiencies but socio- culture factor including superstitions and taboos that may be associated with malnutrition are not well studied. This study was therefore under taken to explore some of the taboos and nutritional practices in pregnant women in Bareilly.

## Aim of the Study

1. To study the extent of involvement of social food taboos in nutrition of pregnant women.
2. To study the reason of food taboo.

## Methodology

The study on social taboos of food habits was carried on females randomly chosen from the society belonging to different cast and religion, nuclear and joint families, different socio-economic status and age with special focus on pregnant women.

Interview cum questionnaire method was used for data collection. A self developed interview schedule will be used for this purpose.

**Results and Discussion**

100% females believed that the dietary changes are necessary during pregnancy. All the participants respond positively stating that few foods are harmful in pregnancy and few are beneficial so changes in the diet are inevitable.

85.9% females responded that the requirement of food increase during pregnancy.

70.6% females accepted the Taboo that ginger, tea, Rataloo should be avoided in pregnancy. Mostly concluded that these foods produce undesirable effect on foetus.

66.8% favoured that papaya should not be given during pregnancy among them 35.3% gave the reason that it can cause abortion.

All the females showed embankment towards more addition of carrot, reddish and green leafy vegetables in the diet.

63.30% females stated that vinegar and Pickle should be avoided by the pregnant women.

60.30% strongly supported this belief attributing, vomiting and heartburn as a major cause.

"Orange, Milk-kesar and gola-mishri potentiate fairness in the new born was supported by 88.23% females.

Only 30.9% women supported the myth that egg should be better avoided.

Optimism towards use of milk and ghee for help during parturition was shown by 94.11% of the total contestants.

**Table No.1  
Responses for the Statement**

| S. No. | Statement   | Total% |      |
|--------|---|--------|------|
|        |   | Yes    | No   |
| 1      | Dietary changes are necessary during pregnancy                        | 100    | -    |
| 2      | requirement of food increases during pregnancy                        | 85.3   | 14.7 |
| 3      | Ginger , tea ,rataloo should be avoided during pregnancy              | 70.6   | 29.4 |
| 4      | papaya cause abortion   | 66.9   | 33.1 |
| 5      | vinegar and pickles should be avoided during pregnancy                | 63.2   | 36.8 |
| 6      | more addition of carrot , reddish and green leafy vegetables in diet. | 100    | -    |
| 7      | orange, milk-kesar, gola-mishri,potentiate fairness in the new born   | 88.2   | 11.8 |
| 8      | egg pose risk of baldness in infants                                  | 30.9   | 69.1 |
| 9      | pregnant women should avoid arhardal and fried food                   | 42.6   | 57.4 |
| 10     | mixture of milk and ghee isa helpful in delievery                     | 94.1   | 5.9  |

**Table No. 2  
Special Food Included and Avoided During Pregnancy**

| Food Avoided  |  |                                      |      |
|---------------|--|--------------------------------------|------|
| 1             | Tea, Ginger, Ratalu, Hot Foods         | Undesirable effect on foetus         | 47.1 |
| 2             | Papaya                                 | Abortive                             | 66   |
| 3             | Egg                                    |                                      | 30.9 |
| 4             | Pulses (Arhar) And Fried Food          | Vomiting and heavy foods             | 42.6 |
| 5             | Pickles And Vinegar                    | Vomiting and heart burns             | 60.3 |
| Food Included |  |                                      |      |
| 1             | Carrot, Reddish, Green Leafy Vegetable | For growth and development pf foetus | 100  |
| 2             | Milk With Saffron Gola-Mishri, Oranges | To improve the complexion of foetus  | 88.2 |
| 3             | Mixture Of Milk And Ghee               | Helps in easy delievery              | 94.1 |

**Conclusion**

All the taboos should be searched and enlisted for finding some scientific explanation. In rooted healthy taboos should be motivated to accept them through health agencies, nutritional education and involving mass media. Unhealthy customs and practises should be discarded and education regarding harmful effects of these taboos should be given.

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