



# KNOWLEDGE ON HEALTH EFFECTS OF JUNK FOOD CONSUMPTION AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

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## Abstract

Consumption of the junk food invites various health problems. The main reason for junk food consumption among pregnant women was taste. Convenience sampling was adopted to select 25 pregnant women from primary health centre of Burkit Managar in Tirunelveli district. Questionnaire was used to elicit information from the pregnant women. Around 80 per cent of the pregnant women reported that taste is the major reason to select the junk food. Majority of the pregnant women did not know about the side effects of junk food consumption during pregnancy. The researcher identified consumption of millets was less among the selected pregnant women.

**Keywords : Junk Food, pregnant women, Health, side effects.**

## Introduction

Consumption of the junk food invites various health problems. The habit of the consumption of junk food is continuously increasing in young generation and especially among pregnant women because of craving while pregnant. The main problems of eating junk foods are increasing obesity, which further leads to many health complications in pregnant women. The main reason for junk food consumption among pregnant women was taste.

Globally, the term junk food is popularly used to identify items with little or no nutritional value but high in fat, salt and sugar (Keshari & Mishra, 2016). Globalisation and urbanisation have greatly affected one's eating habits and forced many people to consume fancy and high calorie fast foods popularly known as Junk foods (Ashakiran & Deepthi, 2012). Pregnancy is a time to be cautious about foods and eating healthfully. More nutrients are need for healthy weight and proper development of brain, bones, organs and immune system of baby. Cravings can be at an all-time high during pregnancy. Junk

food is low in nutritional value, it doesn't provide necessary nutrients during pregnancy (Pillai, 2019). From fried pickles to ice cream at midnight, women have some pretty crazy food cravings during pregnancy. Blame the extreme hormonal changes that expectant women experience, which play a major role in their sense of taste and smell (Kumari, 2020).

Chundawat (2020) found that Eating junk food during pregnancy increases the risk of allergies and asthma in the baby, as eating food with excessive sugar affects the baby. Consumption of junk food leads to excessive weight gain, which further leads to several complications such as birthing a big baby, early labor, gestational diabetes, increased risk of birth defects, miscarriage and stillborn baby. A qualitative study was conducted among 14 pregnant adolescents through focus group discussion in Mid-Atlantic region. Nancy (2015) found that pregnant adolescents demonstrate overall knowledge of healthy foods but are unwilling to give up unhealthy foods. Pregnant adolescents choose foods based on appearance and taste, cravings, convenience, and cost and also pregnancy alters eating habits.

In the light of the above facts realizing the junk foods, significance of healthy foods and its health concern were under taken in this study with the following objectives:

### Objectives of the study

1. To know about the socio economic background of the selected Pregnant women.
2. To understand the health status and life style pattern of the Pregnant women.
3. To find out the knowledge on junk foods and its related issues among Pregnant women.

### Methodology

The present study was adopted quantitative in nature. Convenience sampling was followed for the study to select 25 pregnant women from primary health centre of Burkit Managar in Tirunelveli district was selected for conduct of the study. This area was selected because of the willingness and the co-operation rendered by the subjects and the investigator were well known to the area for the conduct of this study. The trimester of the pregnant women selected was chosen between 1-3, 4-6 and 7-9. The pregnant women age between 16 to 35 years were selected to assess their knowledge on junk foods, food consumption pattern, pregnancy and its related knowledge etc.

A well framed Questionnaire was formulated to know their general information. A detailed study was conducted with the help of a complete questionnaire. The questions from the questionnaire were asked to the respondents and the observer recorded their answers through the use of the interview method. The respondents interacted in a respectful manner and the observer recorded the responses. The survey was designed to collect data on the prevalence and pattern of antenatal consumption habits.

The researcher recorded the junk food consumption among pregnant women with the help of trained health professionals like Village Health Nurse (VHN) by the use of questionnaire. The subjects were clinically examined from head to foot with the help of a physician under bright illumination to identify the presence of any clinical symptoms revealing their health and nutritional status. Diet survey was conducted by interviewing the subjects using Questionnaire formulated for the purpose to elicit information about the back ground information and the food consumption patterns and pregnancy related issues of the subjects. How often and what times, the pregnant women (1) ate certain foods (e.g. fresh fruit, meat, and fast foods), (2) drank certain beverages (e.g. regular coffee, beer, and juice), and (3) ingested prescription and over-the-counter medications during pregnancy. Assess the knowledge of pregnant women related to junk food consumption and its effects of baby and pregnant women.

## Results and Discussion

The pregnant women age between 16 to 35 years were selected to assess their knowledge on junk foods, food consumption pattern, pregnancy and its related knowledge etc.

**Table 1**  
**Choice of Junk Food among Pregnant Women**

Choice of Junk Food	No.	%
Taste	20	80
Large availability	1	4
Advertisement	4	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 reported that choice of junk food among pregnant women. Around 80 per cent of the pregnant women reported that taste is the major reason to select the junk food, 16 per cent of them reported that advertisement motivated to eat junk food and four per cent reported large availability in the market induce to purchase junk food.

**Table 2**  
**Reason to Eat Junk Food**

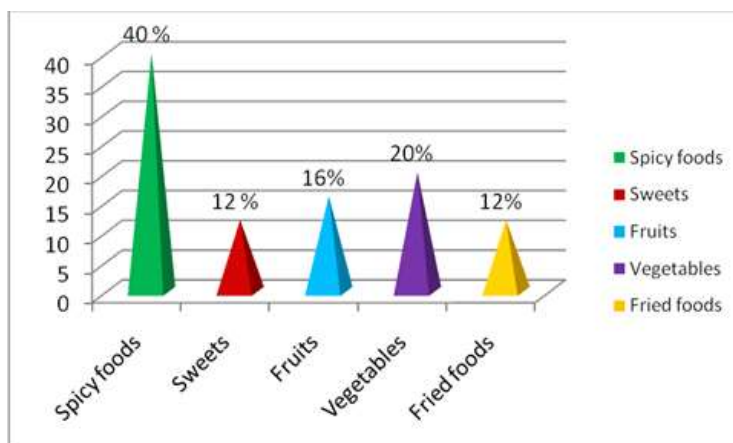
Reason to eat Junk Food	Pregnant women* (N=25)	
	No.	%
Routine or childhood habits	15	60
Convenience	18	72
Attractive	13	52
Delicious taste	9	36

**\*Multiple Responses**

Table 2 depicted that reason to eat junk food, 72 per cent reported that junk food easily available and convenient to use, 60 per cent of the respondents eating junk food their routine and childhood habits, 52 per cent of them attractive packaging increase their consumption and 36 per cent reported that delicious taste stimulate and tempted to eat junk food. Majority reported that easy to use and purchase, routine or childhood habits make them to eat junk food.

Figure 1

## Foods Most Liked by Pregnant Women



From the figure 1 shows that, 40 per cent of them like to ate Spicy foods during pregnancy, 20 per cent of them like vegetables and 16 per cent of them ate fruits very eagerly. 12 per cent of the pregnant women akin to sweets and also similar to that 12 per cent of them like to ate fried foods. Most of them (40 per cent) like to ate spicy foods during pregnancy.

Table 3

## Frequent Junk Food Consumption among Pregnant Women

Particulars of Junk Food	Pregnant women* (N=25)	
	No.	%
Noodles (Yippee and Maggi)	19	76
Lays	10	40
Kurkure	12	48
Chocolate	23	92
Ice Cream	8	32
Cakes/cookies	17	68
Vada bajji	25	100
Masala puri	23	92
Puffs/Samosa	21	84

\*Multiple Responses

Table 3 highlighted that Frequent Junk Food Consumption among Pregnant Women 100 per cent liked to eat vada and bajji frequently, 92 per cent consumed chocolate. Masal puri was consumed by 92 per cent, puffs/samosa were consumed by 84 per cent, cake/cookies ate by 68 per cent , kukure was consumed by 48 per cent, lays was consumed by 40 per cent and Ice cream was consumed by 32 per cent.

Table 4

## Food consumption pattern of the selected pregnant women

Food stuffs	Frequency of food consumption									
	Daily		Thrice a Week		Twice a Week		Once a Week		Rarely	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Cereals	22	88	1	4	2	8	-	-	-	-
Millets	4	16	1	4	5	20	5	20	10	40
Pulses	14	56	1	4	7	28	3	12	-	-
Milk and Milk Products	23	92	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	8
Meat Products	-	-	1	4	8	32	8	32	8	32
Fruits	22	88	2	8	1	4	-	-	-	-
Vegetables	25	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sugar, Fats and Oils	19	76	2	8	2	8	-	-	2	8

Table 4 clearly depicts that, among the selected volunteers, about 88 per cent of them consumed cereals daily, the remaining 12 per cent of the selected volunteers consumed cereals weekly. With regard to the consumption of millets, 16 per cent of the selected volunteers consumed daily, 4 per cent consumed thrice a in week and 20 per cent consumed twice in a week followed by 20 per cent of them consumed once in a week and remaining 40 percent of the pregnant women consumed rarely. This shows that the consumption of millets less among selected women pregnant women. The researcher should thought about the nutritional importance of millets in their diet and the main vitamins and minerals present in millet.

Regarding the consumption of pulses, 56 per cent of the selected volunteers consumed daily, followed by thrice in a week (4%), twice in a week (28%) and remaining 12 per cent consuming once in a week. Data regarding the consumption of Milk and Milk products, 92 of the selected volunteers consumed milk and milk products daily and 8 per cent consumed rarely. With regard to the consumption of meat products, 4 per cent of the selected volunteers consumed thrice a week, followed by 32 per cent of them consumed twice and once in a week equally and remaining 32 per cent of them rarely in their diet pattern.

Regarding the consumption of vegetables, 100 per cent of the selected pregnant women consumed daily. This shows that plenty of vegetables available in low cost and its lead to more consumption among pregnant women. Around 76 per cent of the selected pregnant women consumed sugars, fats and oil on daily followed 8 per cent of them consumed thrice, twice and once in a week equally.

Table 5

## Views on Effects of Junk food Consumption during Pregnancy

Views about Junk Food Consumption	Pregnant Women (N=25)		
	Response	No.	%
Coffee and Tea consumption increases at risk of low birth weight baby	Yes	11	44
	No	14	56
Consumption of junk food increases the risk of gestational diabetes	Yes	3	12
	No	22	88
Excessive intake of deep-fried food may upset your stomach	Yes	8	32
	No	17	68
Eating junk food during pregnancy increases the risk of allergies and asthma in the baby	Yes	5	20
	No	20	80
Consumption of junk food leads to PCOS in women	Yes	1	4
	No	24	96
Babies are prone to mental disorders if their mothers follow an unhealthy diet	Yes	9	36
	No	16	64

**\*Multiple Responses**

Table 5 outlined that Majority (96) of the pregnant women don't know consumption of junk food leads to PCOS in women, 88 per cent of respondents don't know consumption of junk food increases the risk of gestational diabetes and 80 per cent not knowing about eating junk food during pregnancy increases the risk of allergies and asthma in the baby, 68 per cent don't know excessive intake of deep-fried food may upset your stomach, 64 per cent of the subjects don't know babies are prone to mental disorders if their mothers follow an unhealthy diet and 56 per cent of the pregnant women don't know coffee, tea and soft drinks consumption during pregnancy increases at risk of low birth weight baby. So, majority of the pregnant women not knowing about the side effects of junk food consumption during pregnancy.

**Conclusion**

The pregnant women are protected from junk food consumption by increasing the awareness about the health problems associated with junk and fast food. The habit of junk food can be avoided by strong will power and awareness of the side effects associated with them. Pregnant women must be educated about the harmful effects of junk food on health, this may be pretty helpful in avoiding of junk food and problems associate with them. According to the Geetha & Sunita (2013) Nutritionist, doctors, and other health advocates often work to educate people about junk food, encouraging them to eat well balanced diets which contain a high proportion healthy food. Nutrition counselling regarding the significance of a balanced diet and harmful effects of fast foods may help to curb the fast food addiction. From the study, consumption of millets was less among selected pregnant women. The researcher should thought about the

nutritional importance of millets in their diet through Nutrition Education because the main vitamins and minerals present in millet.

## Suggestion

From the survey we can find out that the impact of junk food on pregnant women in society is quite high, we have to stop this or else it will be a great difficulty to maintain a good health.

- ❖ We should substitute the junk food by the tasty food made at home. Junk food made at home is less harmful to health.
- ❖ If the price of junk food is much expensive then people will hesitate to buy it this can reduce the consumption of junk food.
- ❖ Banning the junk food is essential to reduce the consumption among the community.
- ❖ The people should be given knowledge about healthy food so that this junk food can be stopped.

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