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An Effectual Analysis on the Dietary Consumption Patterns in Muslim Pregnant Women for Nutrition and Child Care in Ramadan

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Abstract

The holy month of Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and a time when many Muslims across the world fast during daylight hours for 29-30 days. The Islamic calendar is lunar and so Ramadan falls at a slightly earlier time in the year each year. Muslims taking part in Ramadan do not eat or drink anything during daylight hours, eating one meal (the 'suhoor' or 'sehri') just before dawn and another (the 'iftar') after sunset. The end of Ramadan is marked by 'Eid-ul-Fitr', the Festival of the Breaking of the Fast. A special celebratory meal is eaten during the festival, the first daytime meal for a month. The work is focusing towards the eating habits in the pregnant muslim women for the overall health and nutrition.

Keywords: Fasting, Muslim Women, Nutrition, Ramadan, Ramazan

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Preamble

During fasting hours when no food or drink is consumed, the body uses its stores of carbohydrate (stored in the liver and muscles) and fat to provide energy once all the calories from the foods consumed during the night have been used up. The body cannot store water and so the kidneys conserve as much water as possible by reducing the amount lost in urine. However, the body cannot avoid losing some water when you go to the toilet, through your skin and when you breathe and when you sweat if it is warm.

Fasting Patterns

Hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world will be fasting as the Islamic holy month of Ramadan starts. About 75 percent of all Muslim pregnancies overlap with Ramadan in any given year, suggesting that more than one billion Muslims living today were potentially exposed to their mother's fasting in utero.

Fasting during Ramadan involves abstinence from eating and drinking, among other behaviors, between sunrise and sunset for 29 to 30 days. Although Islamic law exempts pregnant women from fasting, there is evidence that a majority of pregnant Muslim women fast during some part of Ramadan.

During the month of Ramadan when daytime fasting is obligated to every adult Muslim, various degrees of behavioural changes may occur among pregnant Muslim women. Meal frequencies are usually reduced to two times per d; one large meal when breaking the fast in the evening and another smaller meal during *sahoor* at dawn. Many seasonal meals which consist of sugary and fatty foods are commonly served during this month. Physical activities and sleeping pattern are also affected, as people tend to be more active at night. Ramadan lasts for 29–30 days and shifts forward by approximately 11 days each year, since it is based on the Islamic lunar calendar.

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Three out of every four pregnant Muslim women are exposed to Ramadan. According to the Islamic rule, pregnant women, together with breastfeeding mothers, are exempted from the obligation to fast during Ramadan. They are permitted to postpone their fasting until after delivery or to feed one poor person for each day they do not fast. However, many women choose to fast during pregnancy to share the spiritual experience with their family. The proportion of fasting pregnant Muslim women varies globally, ranging from 50–70 % (in Iran, The Netherlands)[,16–18] to 70–90 % (in England, Singapore, USA, Gambia and Yemen). Despite its widespread adherence, evidence on the health effects of Ramadan fasting during pregnancy (both maternal and fetal) is still limited. Dietary intake and weight gain of fasting pregnant women were reported to be less than in the non-fasting.

Metabolic alterations associated with fasting have also been reported, which include reduction in serum glucose and insulin levels and elevation in serum TAG, cortisol and leptin concentrations. Several studies showed no association between Ramadan exposure during pregnancies with birth weight, or the risk of low birth weight. On the contrary, several other studies reported a lower birth weight with Ramadan exposure. Many of these studies, however, did not differentiate Ramadan exposure (as overlap between pregnancy and the month of Ramadan) from actual fasting exposure, which potentially leads to dilution of effects.

Depending on the weather and the length of the fast, most people who fast during Ramadan will experience mild dehydration, which may cause headaches, tiredness and difficulty concentrating. However, studies have suggested that this is not harmful to health, provided that enough fluids are consumed after breaking the fast to replace those lost during the day. However, if you are unable to stand up due to dizziness, or you are disoriented, you should urgently drink regular, moderate quantities of water – ideally with sugar and salt – a sugary drink or rehydration solution. If you faint due to dehydration, your legs should be raised above your head by others, and when you awake, you should urgently rehydrate as outlined above.

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For those who would normally consume caffeinated drinks such as tea and coffee during the day, the lack of caffeine during the fast may initially lead to headaches and tiredness. This may ease over the course of Ramadan as the body adjusts to going without caffeine during the day.

Once the fast is broken, the body can rehydrate and gain energy from the foods and drinks consumed. Having not eaten for a long period, you may find it helpful to eat slowly when breaking the fast and to start with plenty of fluids and low-fat, fluid-rich foods

The dilemma over fasting during Ramadan bothers many expectant mothers. Questions on whether or not it is safe to fast during pregnancy worries women often. We bring you some expert advice on the issue so that you and your baby stay safe and healthy through this Ramadan.

This has to be decided by your doctor who is in full knowledge of issues relating to your pregnancy. If your doctor suggests fasting, you may go ahead with it. In general, any pregnant woman who suffers from complications during pregnancy, like high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney infections or heart problems must refrain from fasting.

According to Dr Rashi Gupta, Specialist Obstetrics and Gynecology at iCare Clinics, Dubai, there are certain essential tips to follow while fasting for pregnant women:

1. Stay hydrated. Drink plenty of water at Suhur and Iftar
2. Break your fast with a healthy meal including protein, fruits, dates and fiber
3. Break the fast in case you feel too weak
4. Eat energy rich foods during Suhur
5. Avoid activities which will leave you physically exhausted while fasting
6. Take rest and sleep well

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Statistical Data Analysis using Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-Sided)	Exact Sig. (2-Sided)	Exact Sig. (1-Sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.491[a]	1	.010		
Continuity Correction [b]	4.636	1	.19		
Likelihood Ratio	5.317	1	.01		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.19	.008
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.548	1	.011		
N of Valid Cases	128				

1. 0 SPSS evaluation cells (.0%) are having the count in expected dimensions less than 5. The minimum expected count is 19.72
2. Computed only for a 2 x 2 table

The Pearson's Chi^2 value if 5.491, p=0.1 and the results illustrates that there is Huge Impact of responsiveness and the satisfaction level towards the dietary patterns.

		Assurance (Spending Quality Time with Nutrition) Factors		
		Yes	No	Total
Satisfaction in nutrition and food consumption	No Empathy	90	10	100
	Yes	10	18	28
Total		100	28	128

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Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-Sided)	Exact Sig. (2-Sided)	Exact Sig. (1-Sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.492[a]	1	.010		
Continuity Correction [b]	4.637	1	.20		
Likelihood Ratio	5.318	1	.02		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.29	.009
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.550	1	.011		
N of Valid Cases	128				

1. 0 SPSS evaluation cells (.0%) are having the count in expected dimensions less than 5. The minimum expected count is 18.87
2. Computed only for a 2 x 2 table

The Pearson's Chi^2 test generates the result of 5.492, p=0.1 and the outcomes delineates that there is solid effect of assurance and empathy that is embraced and practiced at the levels of nutrition.

Conclusion

The fast is strictly observed, even in higher latitudes, by all adult Muslims. The elderly, sick, and mentally ill are exempt from the fasting. Also exempt are pregnant women, women during the period of their menstruation, and women nursing their newborns. In some Muslim communities, people who miss the fasting portion of Ramadan generously feed the poor and unfortunate during the suhoor and iftar meals. "During iftar, a series of snacks are cooked. Some people prefer to have a few snacks and opt for having a complete dinner after. The paper is presenting the patterns of food consumption in the muslim women and their dietary habits.

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