Food Taboos
During Pregnancy
and Lactation
Across the World

In many countries, women have to deal
with food restrictions during their pregnancy
or lactation. Many of these food taboos are
related to animal-source foods or fruits
and vegetables. Restriction of these foods
during pregnancy and lactation can be very
harmful for both the mother and fetus,
as essentials nutrients such as protein and
vitamins are lacking in the diet.

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In many countries, women have to deal with food taboos and misconceptions during pregnancy and lactation. Many of these food taboos are rooted in cultural practices and beliefs. Here are some examples:

- **Camel meat is said to result in a one-year pregnancy** in Niger.
- **Pepper and bitter tomatoes are thought to cause skin problems in the baby (rashes or pimples) or to make the baby very irritable** in Gambia.
- **'Cold' or 'cooled-down' meals are considered a threat because pregnancy is related to a state of excessive body warmth** in Burkina Faso.
- **Honey is said to cause respiratory problems in the baby** in Ghana.
- **Snails are believed to make the child sluggish and salivate excessively** in Nigeria.
- **Mutton is believed to cause epilepsy in the newborn. Frog is believed to make the newborn naughty** in China.
- **Excessive consumption of mangoes is said to cause abortion** in Nepal.
- **Sour foods (such as vinegar and citrus fruit) are believed to cause retardation of fetal growth or increased fetal and maternal susceptibility to infection** in Vietnam.
- **Pineapples are believed to cause abortion** in Ethiopia.
- **Tofu (which falls apart easily) is said to result in a weak child** in Korea.
- **Camel meat is said to result in a one-year pregnancy** in Niger.
- **Meat is said to cause late and difficult delivery, and the child will acquire the characteristics of the animal consumed** in Tanzania.
- **Papaya and pickled food are said to make the child unintelligent or unhealthy.** in Thailand.
- **Meat is believed to make the child eyes like a fish** in India.
- **Fish is said to give the child eyes like a fish** in Namibia.
- **Eggs are said to cause the baby to be born hairless** in Zambia.
- **Food containing beans is believed to cause constipation and discomfort** in Kenya.
- **Green pepper is said to cause the baby to be born hairless** in Ethiopia.
- **Green pepper is said to cause the baby to be born hairless** in Ethiopia.
- **Sugar cane is believed to cause the baby to be born with grey skin** in Malawi.
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