

Dietary Change during Pregnancy and Women's Reasons for Change

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Abstract

Women often make dietary changes during pregnancy; however, dietary modifications and reasons for changes are not well studied. We aimed to describe the dietary changes made during pregnancy, describe reasons for dietary changes, and determine what changes aligned with recommendations. Pregnant women ($n = 379$) recruited to the Alberta Pregnancy Outcomes and Nutrition (APrON) study in 2009/2010 completed a questionnaire in which they described dietary changes made during pregnancy and reasons for those changes. Changes and reasons were coded into categories. Women commonly reported increasing their intake of milk products, fruit, and sweet items and commonly decreased or eliminated

intake of caffeine, alcohol, and meats. Women frequently reduced intake of foods for the baby's health and increased foods to satisfy cravings. Changes made commonly aligned with recommendations for caffeine, alcohol intake, food safety, milk and alternatives, and fruit. Changes contrary to recommendations were common for fish and meats. The dietary changes women make during pregnancy appear to reflect women's efforts to balance physiological changes accompanying pregnancy with the desire for healthy pregnancy outcomes. Understanding the reasons behind dietary change during pregnancy will help researchers and health professionals design effective strategies and public health messages to promote healthier pregnancies.

Keywords: pregnancy, nutrition, diet, female, food habits