

ABSTRACT

PICA BEHAVIOR AMONG PARTICIPANTS IN WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC) PROGRAMS IN FRESNO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

This study examined the practice of pica among pregnant and breastfeeding women who attended three WIC programs in Fresno County, California. The frequency of pica practice and number of different pica items ingested by individuals were identified. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using closed- and open-ended questions. Interviews were conducted with 252 urban and rural participants.

The relationship of pica practices to demographic variables and history of family and childhood pica was explored. Ice was the most frequently reported pica item. Participants reporting a family history of pica, and those who practiced pica in childhood were at increased risk for practicing pica during pregnancy or while nursing an infant.

The researcher recommended that future studies, conducted in collaboration with the American Dental Association, investigate whether ice eating has any deleterious effects on overall dental health.

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