

Title: The Relationship Between Diet Quality and Dieting Behavior in a Population of Pregnant, Black, White, and Hispanic Women

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The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between dieting behavior and quality in an ethnically mixed population. Ethnicity is believed to play a significant role in nutritional status affecting prenatal and perinatal outcomes. Although low-income levels and educational attainment are linked to low birth weight (LBW), Mexican-American women of this socioeconomic category have been shown to exhibit protective health behaviors related to culture. It is believed that these behaviors may explain their lower rates of LBW infants. Methods included the assessment of nutrient intake, the Healthy Eating Index (HEI), and demographic/sociocultural information via a semi-quantitative food frequency questionnaire in 137 Hispanic, 101 white and 38 black pregnant women. Descriptive and student t-tests were performed. Results indicate that the mean \pm standard deviation for calorie intakes were 1997 ± 654 (white), 2367 ± 915 (black), 2198 ± 843 (Hispanic). Mean HEI scores were 67.8 (white), 64.1 (black), and 74.1 (Hispanic). Additional significant differences were found in HEI scores between black and Hispanic women and between white and Hispanic women ($p < 0.001$). Both black and Hispanic women consumed fewer calories from sweets versus white women: 13.3% (white), 10.1% (black), and 8.02% (Hispanic) ($p < 0.01$). The average number of weight loss trials for both white and black women was significantly more than of Hispanic women ($p < .001$). The results suggest that pregnant Hispanic women have better overall dietary quality, consume fewer calories from sweets, and have fewer weight loss attempts compared with black and white women. Further investigation into the food preferences and practices of ethnic minority women is encouraged.