

## The prevalence of pica in pregnant women referring to health centers in Zahedan, 2003

Mortazavi Z.(M.Sc.)<sup>1</sup>, Mohammadi M.(M.Sc.)<sup>2</sup>.

1- Master of Nutrition Science, Department of Public Health, Faculty of Health, Zahedan University of Medical Sciences, Zahedan, Iran.

2- Instructor, Department of Epidemiology & Statistics, Faculty of Health, Zahedan University of Medical Sciences, Zahedan, Iran.



### Abstract

Some pregnant women cravings for non-food substances with no nutritional value which is called pica such as dirt, clay, paint chips, chalk, ice, etc. Most frequently, pica occurs in children, persons with mental retardation and women during their pregnancies or while they are breast-feeding. Pica is considered to be a serious eating disorder, sometimes resulting in serious health problems such as lead poisoning, bowel blockage, and iron deficiency anemia. In a cross-sectional survey (with randomized multi stage sampling) the prevalence of pica was studied in 560 pregnant women who referred to health centers in Zahedan. Using a structured questionnaire, over a four-month period information were obtained from all mothers. The prevalence of pica among the subjects was 15.5%, in which 25.3% of them ate dirt, 60.9% ice, and others substances such as chalk, rosary praying clay, freezer frost, tea stuff and other non-food substances. Considering that pica is not limited to any culture, race, sex or socioeconomic background and also can result in dangerous and serious health problems, therefore needs to raise public awareness of the adverse effects of this practice is suggested.

**Key words:** Pica, Women, Pregnancy, Prevalence, non-food substances, Complications, and Eating disorder.

**Corresponding address:** Mortazavi Z., Public Health Dep., Faculty of Health, Zahedan University of Medical Sciences, Mashahir Sq., Postal Code 98135, Zahedan, Iran.

**Email:** zimoiran@yahoo.com