

## Cultural Practices Related to Postnatal Care: A Hospital-based Study

### Abstract

**Introduction:** Culture is a learned behavior consisting of customs, beliefs, laws, religion etc acquired through generation, which has a profound influence on health and disease. Most of the cultural practice are based on centuries of keen observation, trial and error. These cultural practices and beliefs are not the same throughout India. with vast variations in language, food habits, dress, economics condition, tradition, beliefs. It has also absorbed, adopted and adapted outside cultures and influences, which have merged into Indian society. Not all customs and beliefs are harmful, some of them have positive values while others may be useless or positively harmful to mother health. Hence an understanding of various traditional postnatal care practices is therefore essential ,if effective behavior change strategies are to be developed and help the planners to formulate effective intervention strategies and provide timely assistance to the mothers. Therefore the present study is undertaken to know the cultural practices related postnatal care of mother in north Karnataka state. **Objectives:** (1) To explore the traditional belief and practices related to postnatal care. (2) To provide health education to all postnatal mothers regarding harmful practices. **Methodology:** Study design: cross sectional study. Study period; 2 months. Study population; All the postnatal mothers during the study period were included in study Sample size; Based on Hospital records and considering the frequency of delivery occurring in the BLDEU shri BMPMC,vijayapura ,a minimum of 200 postnatal mothers (purposive sampling)will be interviewed during the study period. Statistical test; proportion, chi-square test.

**Keywords:** Culture practices, harmful practices, health education, mothers, postnatal

### Introduction

Culture is a learned behavior consisting of customs, beliefs, laws, religion, etc., acquired through generation, which has a profound influence on health and disease.<sup>[1]</sup> Most of the cultural practice is based on centuries of keen observation, trial, and error. These cultural practices and beliefs are not the same throughout India, with vast variations in language, food habits, dress, economics condition, tradition, and beliefs. It has also absorbed, adopted, and adapted outside cultures and influences, which have merged into Indian society. Not all customs and beliefs are harmful; some of them have positive values while others may be useless or positively harmful to mother health. Culture plays an important role in human societies; every culture has its own customs which may have significance influence on health.

Hence, an understanding of various traditional postnatal care practices is therefore essential if effective behavior

change strategies are to be developed and help the planners to formulate effective intervention strategies and provide timely assistance to the mothers. Therefore, the present study is undertaken to know the cultural practices-related postnatal care of mothers in North Karnataka state.

### Objectives

- To explore the traditional belief and practices related to postnatal care
- To provide health education to all postnatal mothers regarding harmful practices.

### Materials and Methods

The present study was a cross-sectional study. Based on Hospital records and considering the frequency of delivery occurring in the BLDEU, Shri BMPMC, Vijayapura, a purposive sampling of 200 postnatal mothers were interviewed during the study.

The study was conducted on Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday every week throughout the study period of 2 months.

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### Rekha Udgiri

Department of Community  
Medicine, BLDEU'S, SBMPMC,  
Vijayapur, Karnataka, India

### Address for correspondence:

Dr. Rekha Udgiri,  
Plot No. 38 "OM," Sadhashiva  
Nagar, Ashram Road,  
Vijayapur - 586 103, Karnataka,  
India.  
E-mail: [drrekhaudgiri@gmail.com](mailto:drrekhaudgiri@gmail.com)

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Data were collected within 48 h of delivery. After explaining the purpose of the study and obtaining their consent for participation in the study, they were interviewed to assess various traditional and cultural practices followed after delivery. Information regarding sociodemographic profile of the family was also obtained from mothers by interview technique by pretested and predesigned questionnaires.

Ethical clearance certificate was obtained from Ethical Clearance Committee of BLDE University. SPSS V 21 (IBM, Vijayapur, Karanataka, India) and MS Excel were used to analyze the data and presented in the form proportion; Chi-square test was applied to know the association between various factors.

## Results

In the present study, majority of the mothers were in the age group between 19 and 22 years (45%), 62% belonging to joint family, 91% were Hindu religion, 45% were

illiterate, 31% were of Class IV socioeconomic status according to modified B. G. Prasad's classification, 60% were primigravida and 61% of mothers belonged to rural area [Table 1].

As shown in Table 2, 76% of the mothers will follow some food taboos, like avoiding some fruits and vegetables after delivery. Thirty-eight percent of them will consume some Ayurvedic preparation after discharge from the hospital. Some of the other cultural practices which are followed by the mothers were oil massage (73%), applying heat to back (100%), tying black thread (65%), lemon was kept below pillow (100%), purification ceremony (91%), mothers were not allowed to go outside in the evening (94%), these practices are not going to effects healthy mother or baby. Other harmful practices such as holy smoke administration (34%), avoiding the use of toothbrush (14%), discarding colostrums (15%), and prelacteal feeds (18%) were also followed by mothers.

Some of the good practices which the mothers will follow after delivery were consumption of fresh food (91%), special food (93%), extra food (88%), and drinking hot water (93%). These practices are definitely help to improve the health of the mother. Other cultural practices are visitors washing hand and legs before entering their room (64%) which is kept separate for mother and baby (51%). Use of warm clothes both for mother and baby (100%) and cloth tied around abdomen (47%) were also followed by mothers.

The present observed that significant association was found between level of literacy with regards to consuming special foods, use of hot water for drinking purpose, and no use of tooth brush at  $P = 0.05$ . Socioeconomic status also shows association with regards to no use of tooth brush and tying black thread at  $P = 0.05$ .

Purification ceremony was practiced more in rural area, and statistically significant was observed at  $P = 0.05$ . The majority of the participant were belong to Hindu and practice of drinking hot water and no use tooth brush observed with regards to religion was found significant at  $P = 0.05$ .

Maximum number of respondents belongs to joint family and association was found with related to type of family and nonuse of tooth brush after delivery. Statistically significant was present with related to discarding colostrums and age of the mother at  $P = 0.05$ .

## Discussion

The present study revealed that some food taboos were followed after delivery, i.e., avoidance of some vegetables and fruits. It is not a good practice; instead of avoidance, they should be motivated to consume it. There is a false belief about hot and cold food, they told some of the

**Table 1: Sociodemographic profile of the respondents (n=200)**

Variables	n (%)
Age (years)	
<18	5 (2.5)
19-22	89 (44.5)
23-26	74 (37)
27-30	19 (9.5)
>31	13 (6.5)
Type of family	
Nuclear	77 (38.5)
Joint	123 (61.5)
Religion	
Hindu	182 (91)
Muslim	16 (8)
Christian	2 (1)
Education	
No formal education	89 (44.5)
Primary	48 (24)
Secondary	57 (28.5)
PUC and above	6 (3)
Socioeconomic status	
I	37 (18.5)
II	35 (17.5)
III	57 (28.5)
IV	61 (30.5)
V	10 (5)
Parity	
Primi	119 (59.5)
Multi	81 (40.5)
Place	
Urban	78 (39)
Rural	122 (61)
Duration of married life (years)	
1-5	147 (73.5)
6-10	47 (23.5)
>10	6 (3)

**Table 2: Responses related to cultural practices followed by mothers (n=200)**

Variables	Yes (%)	No (%)
Avoidance of some vegetables and fruits	153 (76)	47 (24)
Consuming some Ayurvedic preparations	76 (38)	124 (62)
Oil massage	146 (73)	54 (27)
Applying heat to back	200 (100)	0
Tying black thread	131 (65)	69 (35)
Holy smoke administration	69 (34)	131 (66)
Purification ceremony	183 (91)	17 (9)
Lemon was kept under pillow	200 (100)	0
Mothers not allowed leaving home in the evening	188 (94)	12 (6)
Warm clothing for mother and baby	200 (100)	0
Cloth tied around abdomen	94 (47)	106 (53)
Tooth brush usage	29 (14)	171 (86)
Discarding colostrum	31 (15)	169 (85)
Prelacteal feeds	36 (18)	164 (82)
Visitors washing hands and legs before entering the room	129 (64)	71 (36)
Is there a separate room for mother and baby	102 (51)	98 (49)
Any special food	187 (93)	13 (7)
Consumption of fresh food	183 (91)	17 (9)
Intake of extra food	177 (88)	23 (12)
Drinking hot water	187 (93)	13 (7)

vegetables such as potato, cucumber, and fruits such as banana, apple, pineapple, custard apple, and orange are cold food and cause infection.

The present study highlights that some of the cultural practices will be followed among mother after delivery like oil massage, applying heat to back (Agatagi), using warm clothes, tying black thread, drinking some Ayurvedic preparation. These practices are not going to affect the health of the mother or the baby. They provide some relaxation to mother and good sleep.

Some of the cultural practices are very good such as consumption of fresh, special, extra, and hot food after delivery, as we all knew women are least and less feed in the families. This will definitely help to improve the nutritional status of the mothers. Other cultural practices include drinking hot water; it is also a good practice as boiled water is safe. Similar findings were observed by Sunanada and Paul.<sup>[2]</sup>

There will be a separate room for mother and baby; it is a good practice as it is breastfeeding friendly, newborn can be monitored easily, night time fussiness is quickly resolved,<sup>[3]</sup> and also it reduces risk of infections.

Washing hands and legs before entering the room help avoid the spread infection as newborns are at higher risk. Both mother and neonates are not allowed to go outside after late evening because they believe that evil powers are powerful in dark.

Tying belt around the abdomen will be helpful in reducing the obesity. After delivery due to relaxation of muscle, there might be a chance of accumulation fat cells, that can be prevented using abdominal belt.<sup>[4]</sup> Once the baby is delivered, these muscle neither contract immediately nor does the fat disappear. Maternity belt will give support to abdominal organs that are loose to get back to their position.

Other harmful practices such as discarding colostrums (15%), according to the study conduct by Goyle *et al.*<sup>[5]</sup> in Jaipur city, it was found that 85.7% of the mothers discarded colostrum, but it is the best milk for the baby, as colostrums boosts the immunity of the newborn,<sup>[6]</sup> easily digested and discarding colostrums will increase prelacteal feeding of the newborn which is harmful.

Eighteen percent of the mother had given prelacteal feeds such as water, sugar water, and honey to the newborn according to the study conducted by Dawal *et al.* in a rural area of Maharashtra,<sup>[7]</sup> the prevalence of prelacteal feeds in their study was 42.7%. It can be harmful to the newborn as it is less nutritious and intervenes with weight gain and fills the newborn stomach which reduces the time newborn suckles at the breast. It can also be a source of infection. Any prelacteal feeds given before the colostrums will damage the intestine.<sup>[8]</sup>

Nonuse tooth of brush is again a bad practice; they believe that use of tooth brush after delivery may cause early loosing of teeth in future. However to keep the oral hygiene healthy use of tooth brush is must. Holy smoke administration after bath (Dhoopam) may cause respiratory infection or even allergies. These practices can be avoided.

#### Limitation of the study

The present study was hospital-based study, and it was only knowledge based, hence finding of results and conclusion did not be applied to the general population. Further research is required among community-based study and practice oriented.

#### Conclusion and Recommendations

Cultural practices are passed on from elders to youth since generations; they are part of our society, hence more deeply respectable and deeply rooted. Finding of our study highlights some of good practices among mothers can be motivated, at the same time, harmful practices can be avoided by educating and counseling the mother and her family members. Display of the pictures about harmful practices with an educational message in health centers may help in creating awareness. Female literacy is strongly recommended. Research on cultural practices is to be conducted in various localities as it may vary from each place. Medical Colleges and professional bodies must take an active role in implementing behavioral change intervention among people.

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### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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