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About 94 percent of breastfeeding mothers do not follow a proper diet

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The study conducted at the University of Granada revealed that 94% of nursing mothers did not follow a proper diet, as they did not consume the recommended dietary intake of fat, vitamins A, E and iron, and the intake of proteins was too high. The results obtained will serve to enhance breastfeeding mothers' diet and increase nutritional supply to the newborn.

This study was conducted by Jose Luis Gómez Llorente, from the Department of Pediatrics of the University of Granada, and coordinated by professor Cristina Campoy Folgoso. To conduct this study, the researcher collected 100 milk samples from 34 breastfeeding mothers from the provinces of Granada and Almeria. The selected mothers were given a questionnaire on their dietary intake for a period corresponding to the 3 days before the sample taking. The aim was to compare their dietary intake with the recommended dietary reference intake, in order to detect deficiencies and enhance babies' intake of nutrients.

This study revealed some important data. 94% of mothers were found to consume a hypocaloric diet, mainly due to low consumption of fats. Conversely, 94% followed a diet rich in proteins, and their intake of proteins exceeded DRI. The analysed mothers showed deficiencies in Vitamin A and E; 88% of them did not meet DRI of Vitamin A, and 99% presented deficient Vitamin E intakes.

The intake of iron was 13.8 mg/day, which means that 94% of breastfeeding mothers did not meet DRI. They were found to have a deficient intake of this important micronutrient that is essential for the neurological development of their babies.

Andalusian Mothers

The most abundant polyunsaturated fat was unsaturated omega-6 fatty acid. This means 17% to 18% of the overall fatty acids present in the human milk sampled. These percentages found in Andalusian mothers are far higher than those reported in European countries, and they are also higher than those found in other studies conducted in our country. "This could be due" -Gómez-Llorente states- "to the high consumption of polyunsaturated fatty acids -present in vegetable oils- in our region, and to a higher intake of fish, in comparison with other European countries."

As regards fatty acids concentrations in the milk of the women studied, the researcher of the UGR underlines that the most abundant fatty acid was oleic acid -a component of olive oil. This represents 33% to 40% of the total fatty acids present in the human milk sampled, a result which is comparable to that found in other Mediterranean countries.

Jose Luis Gomez Llorente suggests that "human milk is the ideal method of feeding healthy newborns". Among other nutrients, human breast milk supplies lipids, "which play a crucial role and contain unsaturated omega-3 and 6 fatty acids (linoleic acid and linolenic acid) and its long-chain derivatives (arachinodic acid (AA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). The latter is associated with the development of different functions in the newborn, such as cognitive development (learning) and vision development; it is also associated with protection against allergic diseases and atopy." "Breastfeeding mothers can significantly improve the composition of their milk by optimising their diet by following international recommendations" -he notes.

Provided by University of Granada

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