

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH

### Nutrition Knowledge and Dietary Intake of Vitamin A And Iron Among Lactating Teenagers in Kisumu County

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#### Abstract

Vitamin A and iron are essential micronutrients during lactation and deficiencies could have adverse health consequences for teenage mothers. The prevalence of teenage pregnancy in the county stands at 11.1%, marginally lower than the prevalence in Kenya which stands at 15%. Teenage mothers are a particularly vulnerable group to nutrient deficiencies due to intense energy utilization and increased nutrient requirements. In Kenya, 21.3% of non-pregnant women, experience iron-deficiency while about 1.1% experience vitamin A deficiency. Kenya lacks adolescent-specific data in its National Health Information Management Systems, which makes it difficult to track micronutrient status of teenagers. The aim of this study was to assess the dietary intake and nutrition knowledge on vitamin A and iron among lactating teenage mothers aged 14-19 years in Kisumu County. A cross-sectional analytical study design was adopted and data was collected on a sample of 104 respondents. A 24-hour dietary recall and 7-day food frequency questionnaire was used to collect data and the individual dietary diversity scores were computed by considering 9 food groups derived from information collected in 24-hour dietary recalls. The findings revealed that 48.0% of the mothers were unemployed while 29.8% had a household income of less than Ksh.5000 per month. 61.5% had inadequate dietary intake of vitamin A while 51.9% had inadequate consumption of iron rich foods. 48.1% and 53.2% of the mothers had moderate nutritional knowledge on vitamin A and iron consumption respectively. 62.5% had consumed 5 out of the 9 food groups and had a medium dietary diversity score. There was a positive correlation between dietary diversity and vitamin A intake ( $P=0.02$ ) and dietary diversity and iron intake ( $P=0.04$ ). This study showed that inadequate dietary intake of vitamin A and iron is a health concern among lactating teenagers despite most of them having moderate nutrition knowledge on the micronutrients. This is mainly due to a moderate dietary diversity score as influenced by low household income. This study recommends interventions that focus on food preparation and meal selection for lactating teenagers and advocacy for income generating activities that are built around keeping teenagers in school.

**Key words:** Dietary intake, Nutrition Knowledge, Lactating teenagers, Dietary diversity