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Madam, as the world moves towards modernisation, the preference forcanned foods is increasing day-by-day especially during pregnancy when a woman wants to nurture her foetus with the best quality of food available in the market. Such food include salad toppings with frozen vegetables, sauces and meat, canned fish and other canned sides, without knowing the harmful effects of these on pregnancy.

Bisphenol, phthalates, polyvinylchloride, and hexachlorobenzene are some of the compounds which are used in canned food for lining and preservative purposes.[1] Such chemicals can be absorbed by the food from container they come in.[2] Impact of such chemicals is not constrained only to the mother but also affects her foetus.[1]

Chemical exposure from such canned foods may result in miscarriages, or severe complications including premature deliveries and preeclampsia by altering hormone level.[3] Furthermore, it alters the development of female reproductive tracts and mammary tissues which can hinder normal gestation period.[2] Due to the estrogenmimicry effect of such chemicals, the fertilised egg is unable to be packed right way in follicles. This increases the chances of detachment, which may result in miscarriages or lead to birth defects.[3,4]

Amniotic fluid allows foetal exposure to different chemicals from the mother with detectable level of phytoestrogens which are common in canned foods. Studies have found compelling evidence that chemicals in canned food may cause chromosomal damages in foetus leading to birth defects including Down's syndrome.[2,5] A United Nations (UN) research team has reported that exposure to such chemicals can affect either genders. In a female foetus, it can alter the hormone levels and affect the reproductive organs, leading to delayed menstruation later on, whereas in a male foetus, it can alter testicular hormonal activity which can result in undescended testis at birth and low sperms count in adulthood.[3]

Pregnant women should avoid the use of canned food items, full of preservatives and chemicals, which find their way onto our dining tables through eye-catching products and wide availability nowadays in supermarkets. One should use fresh fruits and vegetables, and freshly prepared meat during pregnancy to provide nutrition for the baby.

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