ABSTRACT

A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted to determine the food consumption behavior of postnatal mothers and the factors related to this behavior such as knowledge, perception and cultural factors.

This study was conducted at the postnatal ward and postnatal clinic at Maternal & Child Health Hospital, Ratchaburi, from February 21, 1998 to March 21, 1998 by interviewing one hundred and sixty postnatal mothers. A structured questionnaire was used by trained interviewers to interview at the postnatal ward among those mothers who stayed for 3-4 days.

The results of the study show that most of the mothers, 63.1%, had only primary education or less; 48.8% of mothers had good knowledge of food consumption behavior whereas 56.3% had good perception of food consumption behavior.

A Chi-square test was used to find the relationship between food consumption behavior of postnatal mothers with various independent variables. It was found that there were significant relationships between education, occupation and cultural factors with food consumption behavior of postnatal mothers at p-values of 0.0228, 0.0307 and 0.0018 respectively. A statistical significance was determined between knowledge and perception at a p-value of 0.0233. It was revealed that those who had good knowledge also had good perception (52.4%) as compared to those who had poor knowledge.

From the results of the study it is recommended that health education among mothers should be enhanced to improve the mothers' knowledge and perception of food consumption behavior. Further study needs to be done to substantiate the findings of this study. The study of cultural factors is also important in order to have a better understanding concerning postnatal mothers' behavior on food consumption so that health education programs can be designed properly.