

REPRODUCTION SMELLINESS: GARLIC, FENU-GREEK, FLUIDS

*Research about food odors transmitted via
pregnant women*

compiled by Otto Didact, Improbable Research staff

Garlic Ingestion and the Odor of Amniotic Fluid

“Garlic Ingestion by Pregnant Women Alters the Odor of Amniotic Fluid,” Julie A. Mennella, Anthony Johnson, and Gary K. Beauchamp, *Chemical Senses*, vol. 20, no. 2, April 1995, pp. 207-209. The authors, at Monell Chemical Senses Center, Philadelphia, report:

Amniotic fluid samples were obtained from 10 pregnant women undergoing routine amniocentesis procedure... Randomly selected pairs of samples, one from a woman who ingested garlic and the other from a woman who ingested placebo capsules, were then evaluated by a sensory panel of adults. The odor of the amniotic fluid obtained from four of the five women who had ingested the garlic capsules was judged to be stronger or more like garlic than the paired samples collected from the women consuming placebo capsules.

Garlic Ingestion by Pregnant Women Alters the Odor of Amniotic Fluid

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Abstract

Amniotic fluid samples were obtained from 10 pregnant women undergoing routine amniocentesis procedure. Approximately 45 min prior to the procedure, five of the women ingested placebo capsules, whereas the remaining five ingested capsules containing the essential oil of garlic. Randomly selected pairs of samples, one from a woman who ingested garlic and the other from a woman who ingested placebo capsules, were then evaluated by a sensory panel of adults. The odor of the amniotic fluid obtained from four of the five women who had ingested the garlic capsules was judged to be stronger or more like garlic than the paired samples collected from the women consuming placebo capsules. Thus, garlic ingestion by pregnant women significantly alters the odor of their amniotic fluid.

Peculiar Odours in Newborns: Spicy Food

“Peculiar Odours in Newborns and Maternal Prenatal Ingestion of Spicy Food,” G.J. Hauser, D. Chitayat, L. Berns, D. Braver, and B. Muhlbauer, *European Journal of Pediatrics*, vol. 144, no. 4, November 1985, p. 403. The authors, at Tel Aviv Medical Center, Israel, report:

Four cases of newborn infants with peculiar smells are described. In two, the sharp odour was identified as cumin, one smelled of fenu-greek and one of curry. All these babies were born to mothers who ingested spicy food prior to delivery. In one case, the foul-smelling amniotic fluid led to a spurious suspicion of amnionitis.

Peculiar odours in newborns and maternal prenatal ingestion of spicy food

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Abstract. A peculiar odour in an infant may raise the possibility of several important syndromes. Four cases of newborn infants with peculiar smells are described. In two, the sharp odour was identified as cumin, one smelled of fenu-greek and one of curry. All these babies were born to mothers who ingested spicy food prior to delivery. In one case, the Jewish extraction. Upon examination immediately following delivery the physical findings were within normal limits except for the pungent odour of cumin (cumin cuminum), a spice commonly used in oriental cuisine. The hospital course was uneventful for both infants. The mothers reported having eaten “spicy” a sharp-tasting combination of

Reproductive Sniffing, Long Unassessed

“Sperm-Activating Odorous Substances in Human Follicular Fluid and Vaginal Secretion: Identification by Gas Chromatography–Olfactometry and Ca²⁺ Imaging,” Constanze Hartmann, Annika Triller, Marc Spehr, Ralf Dittrich, Hanns Hatt, and Andrea Buettner, *ChemPlusChem*, vol. 78, no. 7, July 2013, pp. 695–702. (Thanks to Veronique Greenwood for bringing this to our attention.) The authors, at University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Ruhr-University, RWTH-Aachen University, and Fraunhofer Institute for Process Engineering and Packaging, all in Germany, report:

Fluids of the female reproductive tract have so far—to the best of our knowledge—not been investigated for odor molecules.