



“*Carica Papaya* and Maternal Health: A Comprehensive Review of Safety, Efficacy, and Clinical Applications in Pregnancy, Lactation, and Reproductive Health”

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ABSTRACT:

This review examines the effects of *Carica papaya* on pregnancy, ovulation, hemoglobin levels, and breastfeeding. Significant morphological changes in embryonic development are known to result from papaya's teratogenic and abortifacient qualities, especially when it is unripe. According to the study, unripe papaya may have contraceptive properties as it might interfere with the estrous cycle and perhaps reduce fertility. The study also shows that pregnant women with anemia can significantly increase their hemoglobin and hematocrit levels by regularly consuming 110 grams of papaya per day, in addition to iron supplementation. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that papaya leaf juice raises prolactin hormone levels, improving the quality of breast milk and promoting the development of nursing mothers' infants. The results show that ripe papaya and its leaf juice can be advantageous dietary components for enhancing maternal health and lactation, while unripe papaya poses risks during pregnancy.

KEYWORDS: Unripe *Carica papaya*, pregnancy, ovulation, lactation, haemoglobin, anaemia, papaya leaf juice.

INTRODUCTION:

The papaya (*Carica papaya*) is the fruit that is most commonly categorized as hazardous during pregnancy in India. Because of the teratogenic and abortifacient properties of papaya, women are strictly prohibited from consuming either ripe or unripe papaya. Eighty-two percent of pregnant women in a survey of 1,200 women from all regions of Tamil Nadu, India, avoided papaya (1). Because papaya plants have specific cells called laticifers, they are laticiferous. Laticifers are found in most plant tissues and exude latex. The four cysteine endopeptidases—papain, chymopapain, glycyl endopeptidase, and caricain—are abundant in papaya latex, which is widely recognized for having varying amounts in fruit, leaves, and roots. Papaya latex is commercially extracted from fully ripe and unripe fruit. Compared to green papaya, ripe papayas have less latex, possibly because the cells that produce latex break down or cease functioning as they age (10). An essential phase of the female reproductive cycle is gestation. Trimester one (age 0–12 weeks), the second (age 13–28 weeks), and the third (age 29–40 weeks gestational age) are the three phases (trimesters) of pregnancy (8). Adequate care should be provided throughout each trimester to ensure a safe birth of the offspring into the world. Oxytocin causes the uterine smooth muscles to contract during parturition (labor) to make it easier for the fetus to be expelled from the uterus. The biological activity of *C. papaya*'s fruits, shoots, leaves, rinds, seeds, roots, and latex, among other components. Papain, chymopapain, cystatin, α-tocopherol, ascorbic acid, flavonoids, cyanogenic glucosides, and glucosinolates are among the several active ingredients found in *C. papaya* leaves that have been demonstrated to raise blood antioxidant levels and lower lipid peroxidation. Papaya fruit and seed extracts have been shown to have bactericidal properties. Folk medicine claims that *C. papaya* latex may help treat external burns and scalds, as well as cure dyspepsia. Papaya fruits and seeds are powerful antihelminthic and antiamoebic agents (7). Saponins, alkaloids, tannins, flavonoids, cardiac glycosides, anthraquinones, phlobatinins, anthocyanosides, and phenols were all detected by pyrochemical study of the *C. papaya*. Each plant portion has a different concentration and makeup of these different phytochemicals (6). Green papaya is utilized as an emmenagogue, a contraceptive, and an abortifacient in traditional Indian medicine (37), which makes iron more soluble in the small intestine and enhances its absorption via the duodenum's Given the global increase in unwanted pregnancies, contraceptives are promoted as a useful tool for addressing issues ranging from HIV/AIDS to unwanted pregnancies (15). Birth control, or contraception, is the term used to describe techniques of preventing conception. The decrease in pregnancies that are highly risky for the life of the mother, fetus, and newborn is the biggest health advantage that female contraceptive usage has demonstrated. Consequently, women employ conventional forms of contraception, such as vaginal rings, tablets, patches, and implants, which can lead to negative health outcomes such as amenorrhea, irregular and heavy bleeding, vaginal discomfort, and diminished libido (15). Iron-rich diets are another strategy to lower the prevalence of anemia in expectant mothers. It is believed that vitamin C can double the absorption of nonheme iron (50). The body absorbs nonheme iron less easily. Ascorbic acid, another name for vitamin C, is a water-soluble vitamin that is believed to improve nonheme iron absorption. By acting as a reducing agent, vitamin C helps the GI tract absorb iron. Iron and vitamin C interact to generate an iron chelate complex in the mucous membranes. Iron absorption is facilitated by vitamin C, which in the colon converts ferric iron (Fe 3+) to ferrous iron

(Fe 2+) for easier absorption. The more acidic the stomach's pH, the bigger the decrease process will be. Increased stomach acid due to vitamin C might result in a 50% increase in iron absorption. 8 Because of this, vitamin C has to be taken concurrently with iron to be effective. According to current guidelines, pregnant women should take 85 mg of vitamin C daily. Vitamin C is said to be abundant in foods like papaya. It requires at least 480 kcal of calories per day to maintain exclusive breastfeeding, which puts a metabolic strain on the mother's body. Therefore, for moms to fulfill their job in nursing, some extra nourishment is required to improve the production of breast milk. Consuming galactogogues, such as papaya, which contain quercetin, which can stimulate the prolactin hormone, also aids in the nursing process (28). It is especially thought that raw or unripe papayas raise oxytocin levels, which in turn promote the production of breast milk.

MORPHOLOGICAL CHARACTERS:

Synonym: pawpaw

Biological source: *Carica papaya* L.

Family: Caricaceae

Color: green(unripe), yellow or orange (ripe)

Shape: oval or pear-shaped, also round or oblong



UNRIPE PAPAYA

Figno:1 (image source: Google)



RIPE PAPAYA

Figno:2(image source:google)

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS OF PAPAYA:

NO.	Categories	Phytoconstituents	Plant Part(s)
1	Enzymes	Papain, chymopapain A and B, endopeptidase papain III and IV glutamine cyclotransferase, peptidase A and B and lysozymes.	Unripe fruit (Latex)
2	Carotenoids	β carotene, cryptoxanthin, violaxanthin, zeaxanthin.	Fruits
3	Alkaloid & Enzyme	Carposide, and an enzyme myrosin.	Roots
4	Glucosinolates	Benzyl isothiocyanate, benzylthiourea, β -sitosterol, papaya oil, caricin and an enzyme myrosin.	Seeds
5	Minerals	Calcium, potassium, magnesium, iron, copper, zinc.	Shoots and Leaves
6	Monoterpenoids	4-terpineol, linalool, linalool oxide.	Fruits
7	Flavonoids	Quercetin, myricetin, kaempferol.	Shoots
8	Alkaloids	Carpinine, carpaine, pseudocarpine, vitamin C and E, choline, carposide.	Leaves and Heartwood
9	Vitamins	Thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, ascorbic acid, α -tocopherol.	Shoots and Leaves
10	Carbohydrates	Glucose, sucrose, and fructose.	Fruits

Fig no:3(image source: google)

MATERIALS AND METHODS:***Role of unripe Carica papaya in pregnancy:***

Abortion will result from different dosages of an aqueous methanolic extract of unripe *Carica papaya*. The unripe papaya fruit, leaves, and stem contain a milky white substance called papaya sap, sometimes referred to as latex. Numerous physiologically active substances found in *C. papaya* latex are what give the fruit its known teratogenic and abortifacient qualities. Fruit, latex, leaves, and roots all have different concentrations of these substances (37). Papain and chymopapain are found in the unripe papaya, which has a high latex content. The papaya's latex is what causes the strong uterine contraction that leads to early labor or miscarriage. An enzyme called papain affects prostaglandin and other chemicals used during birthing. Prostaglandin and oxytocin are stimulated by latex, causing uterine contractions and early labor. The sex and age of the tree also affect how much fresh papaya latex and dry papaya latex (crude papain) are produced. Compared to male trees, crude papain is produced by female and hermaphrodite trees. According to Schmidt (1995), the papain found in *C. papaya* showed signs of embryotoxicity, increased post-implantation loss, and anti-implantation activity (37).

Role of Carica papaya on ovulation:

The process of ovulation is similar to inflammation. Anti-inflammatory medications have been used to prevent ovulation. They work by preventing the cyclo-oxygenase enzyme from functioning. The study's findings showed that while the alcoholic root extract of the male *C. papaya* may have anti-inflammatory qualities because of its alkaloid content, it did not inhibit the cyclo-oxygenase enzyme, particularly COX-2, which is necessary for follicular rupture through the activation of proteases, neovascularization, leukocyte migration, and smooth muscle contraction. This is in contrast to indomethacin, a well-known anti-inflammatory medication used to prevent ovulation (6).

Role of Carica papaya on haemoglobin level during pregnancy:

Hemoglobin and hematocrit levels in pregnant women with anemia can be raised by routinely ingesting 110 grams of papaya daily along with a Fe pill. This is in line with research that found pregnant women's absorption of iron can be enhanced by vitamin C, either in tablet form or as papaya. Giving pregnant women 100 mg vitamin C tablets with a basic diet of rice, corn, and "Tiwal" boosts iron absorption by 37.5% to 46.0%; however, giving them vitamin C in the form of food (250 grams of papaya) can increase absorption by 42 to 54.2%. 13 Another way to put this is that to lower the prevalence of anemia in expectant mothers, iron-rich foods like papaya must be given in addition to the iron tablets that are provided. In addition to iron and vitamin C (78 mg/100 g of papaya), papaya aids in the body's absorption of iron. To facilitate easy absorption of iron, vitamin C converts ferric iron (Fe 3+) into ferrous iron (Fe 2+) in the colon. Furthermore, vitamin C can raise stomach acid and improve iron absorption by as much as 50%. Papayas, which are high in vitamin C, are therefore beneficial for preventing anemia (50).

Role of papaya leaf juice for lactation:

90% of respondents have increased prolactin hormone levels after consuming papaya leaf juice. The average increase of the prolactin hormone is 19.59 ng/ml. The increase of prolactin hormone can occur in just several minutes after breastfeeding; the 16 infants' suction reflex helps to stimulate the production of prolactin hormone (28). The papaya leaves contain the carpinine alkaloids carpinine, pseudocarpaine, dehydrocarpaine I, and dehydrocarpaine II; vitamins B, C, and E; and the minerals Zn, Ca, Fe, K, Na, and Mg. The phytochemical profile of the *Carica papaya* reveals the presence of phytocompounds that are active with pharmacological, alkaloid, phenolic, and amino acid properties. The decreased viscosity of breast milk counteracts the growing number of nursing moms who drink papaya leaf juice. Between days 9 and 12 after intake, the breast milk (foremilk) gets thinner and whiter. The study assumed that papaya leaves may help moms consume less fat. While both varieties of breastmilk are acceptable to feed to newborns, thin breastmilk has more protein and lactose, while thick breastmilk (hindmilk) has more fat. Experiencing discomfort during nursing and a reduction in prolactin hormone levels have generated stress for the responders. This disease then hinders the production of breastmilk, which causes moms to lose confidence as their breastmilk production declines. The woman who drank papaya leaf juice twice a day saw an improvement in her baby's weight. One measure of a baby's growth, whether it proceeds smoothly or not, is the gain in weight. Additionally, the baby's nutritional condition is determined by their weight (28).

RESULT:***Role of unripe Carica papaya in pregnancy:***

The present study investigated the potential teratogenic effects of *Carica papaya* latex on fetal development, revealing significant morphological alterations and growth parameters. The extract's anti-implantation action and abortifacient or fetal resorptive qualities are suggested by the rise in post-implantation loss seen with the extract(37).

Role of Carica papaya on ovulation:

Estrous Cycle Disruption: Unripe papaya has been demonstrated in rat studies to interfere with the estrous cycle and perhaps lower fertility. Potential as a Contraceptive: Studies indicate that some parts of unripe papaya, like the seeds and latex, may have antifertility effects by affecting the uterine lining and lowering progesterone levels.

Role of Carica papaya on haemoglobin level during pregnancy:

The results of this study demonstrated that pregnant women with anemia can improve their hemoglobin and hematocrit levels by regularly consuming 110 grams of papaya daily along with a Fe tablet. Another way to put this is that in order to lower the incidence of anemia in pregnant women, iron-rich foods like papaya must be given in addition to the iron tablets that are provided (50).

Role of papaya leaf juice for lactation:

Giving papaya leaf juice to nursing and working mothers has been shown to increase the prolactin hormone levels and the weight of the resulting child. As a galactagogue, papaya leaf juice can support nursing moms (28).

Conclusion:

The review of *Carica papaya's* effects on pregnancy, ovulation, hemoglobin levels, and breastfeeding highlights the critical differences between ripe and unripe forms of the fruit, emphasizing the importance of ripeness and timing in clinical recommendations.

Ripe papaya is safe and nutritious during pregnancy when consumed in moderation, providing essential nutrients for maternal health and fetal development. In contrast, unripe papaya is risky due to its high latex and enzyme content, which can lead to uterine contractions and potential miscarriage. Unripe papaya also has antifertility properties and disrupts hormonal levels, with its seeds showing anti-implantation activity; more research is needed to establish safe dosing for contraceptive use.

Regular consumption (110 grams daily) of ripe papaya, combined with iron supplementation, significantly improves hemoglobin levels in pregnant women with anemia, enhancing iron absorption due to its high vitamin C content. Additionally, papaya leaf juice is an effective galactagogue, increasing prolactin levels and enhancing breast milk volume and infant weight gain.

Short-term (less than five days) use of papaya leaf juice is generally safe, but caution is advised in pregnancy and liver conditions due to possible herb-drug interactions and long-term safety concerns. Healthcare providers should promote ripe papaya for pregnant and lactating women for its nutritional benefits while advising against unripe papaya during pregnancy. Papaya leaf juice can be recommended as a galactagogue for mothers with low milk production, ensuring proper monitoring.

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