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Now region-specific diet charts to guide pregnant women on their nutritional requirements

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NEWDELHI: Now pregnant women and lactating mothers will be able to access a diet chart to guide them on calories, food groups and what they may eat from breakfast to dinner to prevent malnutrition and anemia. Prepared by Indian Council for Medical Research - National Institute of Nutrition, the ministry of women and child development has started sharing these charts with anganwadis across the country.

Pregnant women and lactating mothers from low income settlements are registered with anganwadis as beneficiaries to supplement their nutrition requirements and health check-ups.

The diet chart is a first of its kind initiative where Hyderabad based ICMR-NIN has created charts for six regions - North, South Central, East, West and North East keeping the different dietary habits and culture in mind. The diet charts give the details of the additional calorie requirement for pregnant women and the importance of getting nourishment from various food groups like cereals, pulses, proteins, vegetables, fats and minerals from nuts.

Speaking at an event on Friday to mark International Women's Day to be observed on Sunday, minister for women and child development Smriti Irani shared that "a diet plan for women and lactating mothers has, for the first time, been formulated by ICMR and shared with all anganwadi centres across the country."

It is learnt from sources that the charts while laying out the importance of food groups also gives a detailed plan for what a woman may eat from breakfast to dinner including the mid-morning and evening snack. For instance, a pregnant woman would need additional 350 kilo calories over the regular requirement of about 1,900 kilo calories a day. Undernourished women are

advised to gain minimum 13 kgs during pregnancy by increasing their diet of pulses, oil and nuts. For overweight pregnant women, there is advise to reduce consumption of sugar, cereal and oil.

For instance, the chart developed for south region has options ranging from dosas, vegetable chutney for breakfast. In case of the chart developed for north India the breakfast options include parantha, daliya, vegetable curry. Boiled eggs are a breakfast option in both the north and south region. Each chart carries a list of do's and dont's.

According to sources, the work on creating diet charts began after Lok Sabha Speaker, while listening to a response to a supplementary question in the House during a Parliament session last year, observed that diet charts must be developed for awareness building. He sought that these charts should be provided to members of Parliament who could take them to their constituencies and share them for awareness. The WCD ministry followed up on this by assigning the task to ICMR-NIN, sources said.