

# Ibanag and Filipino Childbirth Rituals - Beliefs

"For parents, birth rituals and ceremonies provide an immediate sense of connection as well as inclusion of the child into the clan, tribe or community. These rituals establish at a very early stage, who they are. The rituals also serve as guideposts as they grow and develop their own sense of identity. Even if they drift away from or reject their heritage, their early experiences give them a place to return to if they so choose".

The Ibanag culture is filled with childbearing rituals and practices which have been handed down from one generation to another. Here are some of them.

1. It is said that if a pregnant woman has a lot of blemishes or pimples on her face, her baby will be a girl.
2. If the mother glows and radiates beauty, the baby will be a boy.
3. If the mother craves for sweets and other carbohydrates, the baby will be a girl.
4. If the mother is craving for oily or fried foods, the baby will be a boy.
5. The mother should not eat 'balut' (a native duck egg delicacy) to avoid having a hairy baby.
6. If the pregnant woman is obsessively angry with a certain person, her baby will take after that person physically.
7. A pregnant woman is considered to be a good luck charm; take her with you to receive good luck.
8. Pregnant women cannot attend a funeral because the spirit of the dead might possess the baby.
9. Pregnant women are not allowed to take any kind of medicine because it was thought to harm the baby. This is no longer a ritual but a healthy practice.
10. Other therapeutic measures such as massages were used to alleviate pain.
11. To help close the uterus after birth, a warming ritual is performed. A warm object like a large flat stone is placed under the sheets with the woman. The woman is told to stay in bed. The linens act as insulators to maintain heat.
12. After the warming ritual, guava leaves are boiled in a large container of water. This water is used to cleanse the woman.
13. With the exception of the guava bath, women are not allowed to shower for 1 week after birth.
14. Mothers should not shower with cold water to prevent varicose veins.
15. Bed rest beliefs vary from 10 to 30 days or longer.
16. Family members take care of baby as mother is resting in bed.
17. During bed rest, the new mother must always have her head slightly elevated to help stabilize blood flow to the brain.
18. The hilot (local midwife) massages the mother's body with a certain oil for 12 days after birth to strengthen her pelvic muscles.
19. The new mom should place binders to minimize uterine air.
20. Chicken soup mixed with malunggay leaves is given to new mothers to help clean out her system from the "dirty" blood.
21. Clam soup is taken three times a day to help with breast milk production and to fortify the milk with nutrients for the baby.
22. During and after birth mothers should not eat taro to prevent itching to the baby's body.
23. Mother and baby should stay at home for 3 months to provide optimum health.
24. It is not good to praise a newly born baby because it is thought to bring 'usog,' or bad luck, to the child. There are a variety of ways to ward off 'usog', including putting a dot of lipstick on the baby's forehead to keep away evil spirits. If a baby is complimented by strangers, mother must say, "Puera usog" (no hex) or "God bless my child". This is to prevent the baby from getting sick resulting an evil being cursing the baby.
25. Make sure the baby's head is covered every time it goes outside of the house until the baby is one month old; this is to protect the baby from getting sick.
26. When a baby visits a relative for the first time, whoever owns the home gives the baby money, which is thought to bring the homeowner good luck.

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