



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
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Health Services Newsletter

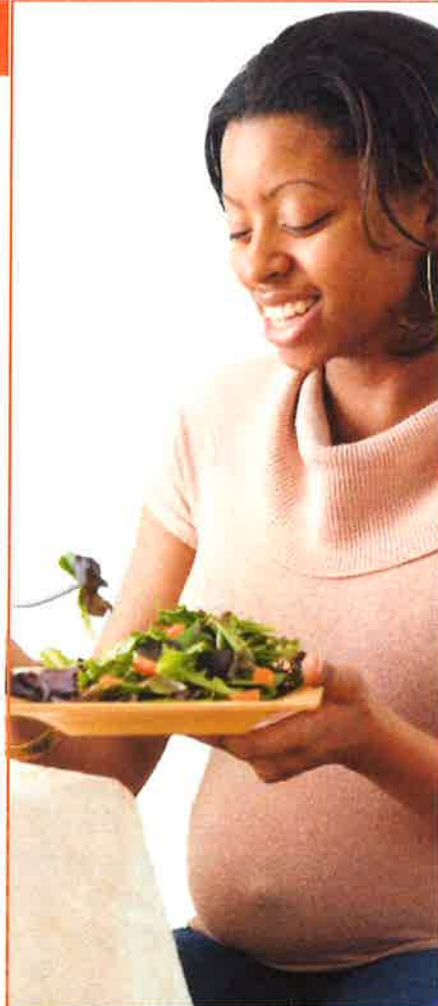
ONE OF THE BEST GIFTS FOR A BABY

One of the most important things women can do for their babies is eating healthy foods during pregnancy. No matter how far along a woman is in her pregnancy, it's never too late to start eating healthy! Eating and drinking whole-grain products, fruits and vegetables, low-fat milk and milk products, lean meats, and other nutritious items during pregnancy gives babies a strong start in life. This is one great way for a mother to show her love for her child before the child even enters the world.

This issue provides information Early Head Start staff can share with pregnant women enrolled in their programs. The issue also includes descriptions of assistance programs that provide nutrition risk assessment, counseling, and education as well as access to supplemental nutritious foods.

Providing pregnant women with nutrition education and counseling can positively affect pregnancy outcomes. Staff can share information in this newsletter with pregnant woman during individual and group nutrition education sessions about what to eat and drink and what to avoid during pregnancy, how much weight to gain, and what to do if conditions like nausea make it hard to eat. Staff can work with women enrolled in Early Head Start to help them set attainable goals during pregnancy.

Pregnant women also benefit from nutrition counseling provided by registered dietitians nutritionists (RDNs). Many pregnant women enrolled in Early Head Start are also enrolled in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), which provides nutrition risk assessment, counseling, and education. More information about WIC is presented in the Nutrition Assistance Programs for Pregnant Women section of this newsletter.



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PRENATAL VITAMIN AND MINERAL SUPPLEMENTS

In addition to eating healthy foods, many pregnant women benefit from taking a prenatal vitamin and mineral supplement each day. Early Head Start staff can encourage women to talk to their prenatal care health professionals about taking prenatal vitamin and mineral supplements.

HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

During pregnancy it's best for women to choose healthy foods that are good for their bodies and their babies. Below is a description of key food groups, vitamins, and minerals important for a healthy pregnancy. Early Head Start staff can encourage pregnant women to discuss what and how much they eat with their prenatal care health professional.

- **Carbohydrates.** About half of a woman's energy should come from carbohydrates, including carbohydrates rich in fiber. Examples are whole-grain products, such as bread, crackers, rice, pasta, and breakfast cereal as well as fruits and vegetables. Pregnant women at risk for gestational diabetes are advised to talk to their prenatal care health professional about whether they should reduce their consumption of carbohydrates.
- **Protein.** Protein helps build tissue for women and their babies. Women need to eat foods high in protein two to three times a day. Examples are lean meat (beef, lamb, and pork), fish, poultry, eggs, dried beans and peas, nuts and seeds, and low-fat milk and milk products.
- **Calcium.** Women need calcium for their babies' growing bones. Good calcium-rich choices are fat-free or low-fat milk products like milk, yogurt, cheese, and cottage cheese; calcium-fortified orange juice; sardines; and green leafy vegetables.
- **Iron.** Women need iron to make extra blood for their babies. Getting enough iron can also help prevent iron-deficiency anemia, which can cause premature birth and low birthweight. Iron is found in meats and fortified grains and cereals. Iron can be absorbed more easily if iron-rich foods are eaten with vitamin C-rich foods, such as citrus fruits and tomatoes.
- **Folate and folic acid.** Folate (found naturally in food) and folic acid (found in supplements and added to fortified foods) promote babies' growth and development and reduce the risk of serious birth defects. Foods naturally rich in folate include legumes, dark green leafy vegetables, citrus fruits and juice, nuts, and sunflower seeds. Foods that are often fortified with folic acid include cereals, breads, flour, cornmeal, pasta, rice, and other grains.
- **Iodine.** Iodine is critical for babies' motor and cognitive development. Good food sources of iodine include milk, cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, baked potatoes, cooked navy beans, and limited amounts (8 to 12 ounces a week) of seafood like cod, salmon, and shrimp.
- **Vitamin C.** Vitamin C helps women's bodies make collagen (found in bones, tendons, cartilage, and connective tissue) and absorb iron. Good sources of vitamin C include oranges, grapefruits, strawberries, honeydew, papaya, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, green peppers, tomatoes, and mustard greens.
- **Vitamin D.** Vitamin D works with calcium to help babies' bones and teeth develop. It also is essential for healthy skin and eyesight. Good sources are milk fortified with vitamin D and certain fish, such as salmon.

FOODS AND DRINKS FOR PREGNANT WOMEN TO AVOID

It is safe to eat most foods during pregnancy, but some can be harmful. Early Head Start staff can encourage women to avoid or limit certain foods during pregnancy.

- **Alcohol.** Alcohol in women's bodies passes to babies through the umbilical cord. Alcohol can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, and a range of physical, behavioral, and intellectual disabilities. All types of alcohol are harmful, including wine and beer.
- **Saccharin.** Saccharin (Sweet 'N Low) can cross the placenta and may remain in fetal tissues. Also, the Food and Drug Administration has not approved Stevia for use as a food additive. Non-nutritive or artificial sweeteners that the Food and Drug Administration has approved for use during pregnancy include acesulfame potassium (Sunett), aspartame (Equal or NutraSweet), and sucralose (Splenda).



FOODS AND DRINKS FOR PREGNANT WOMEN TO AVOID

- **Foods prone to cause foodborne illness.** Pregnant women are at high risk for foodborne illness because their immune system is altered during pregnancy. Symptoms vary but may include stomach pain, vomiting, or diarrhea. Foodborne illness can also cause serious health problems, such as miscarriage, stillbirth, or premature delivery. Early Head Start staff can advise women to avoid eating:
 - ◆ Unpasteurized (raw) milk and foods made with unpasteurized milk
 - ◆ Soft cheeses, such as feta, Brie, Camembert, blue-veined, and Mexican-style unless the food label states that the cheese is made from pasteurized milk
 - ◆ Unpasteurized juice (for example, fresh apple cider)
 - ◆ Hot dogs, luncheon meats, and deli meats (cold cuts) unless they are heated until steaming hot just before serving
 - ◆ Refrigerated pate and meat spreads
 - ◆ Refrigerated smoked seafood, unless it is an ingredient in a cooked dish. Examples include salmon, trout, whitefish, cod, tuna, and mackerel
 - ◆ Raw and undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, or eggs
 - ◆ Shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish (also called white snapper)

FOODS AND DRINKS FOR PREGNANT WOMEN TO LIMIT

- **White (albacore) tuna.** Early Head Start staff can encourage women to limit consumption of white tuna to 6 ounces a week.
- **Caffeine.** Early Head Start staff can encourage women to switch to decaffeinated or caffeine-free products or limit caffeine to no more than 200 to 300 milligrams a day. High consumption of caffeine may result in increased risk of miscarriage and could cause other pregnancy complications. Sources of caffeine include:
 - ◆ Coffee. 1 cup (8 ounces): 150 milligrams of caffeine
 - ◆ Black or green tea. 1 cup (8 ounces): 80 milligrams of caffeine
 - ◆ Soda/pop. 1½ cups or 1 can (12 ounces): 30 to 60 milligrams of caffeine
 - ◆ Chocolate, especially dark chocolate. Varies; may contain significant amounts of caffeine

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH NAUSEA AND OTHER PROBLEMS

During pregnancy, some women experience constipation, diarrhea, heartburn, or nausea. These conditions can make it difficult to eat enough healthy food. Here are some suggestions Early Head Start staff can share with pregnant women:

- **Constipation.** Eat more fresh fruit and vegetables and drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day. Also, stay physically active during pregnancy (for example, brisk walking, dancing, gardening, swimming), unless there is a medical reason not to do so.
- **Diarrhea.** Eat more foods that contain pectin and gums (two types of dietary fiber). Examples are applesauce, bananas, white rice, oatmeal, and refined wheat bread.
- **Heartburn.** Eat small meals frequently throughout the day. Try drinking milk before eating, and limit foods and drinks with caffeine, citrus drinks (like orange juice and lemonade), and spicy foods.
- **Nausea.** Eat crackers, cereal, or pretzels before getting out of bed. Eat small, frequent meals throughout the day, and avoid fatty, fried, spicy, and greasy foods.



NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

Below are resources Early Head Start staff can share with pregnant women. They provide pregnant women with nutrition risk assessment, counseling, and education and help them access supplemental nutritious foods.

Food banks and pantries. These programs are available in every state and provide free and low-cost food to those who need it. [This webpage](#) provides a tool to search by zip code or state for local food banks and pantries for pregnant women who may need nutrition assistance.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) SNAP offers nutrition assistance for individuals, including pregnant women with low incomes. SNAP provides a credit card for participants to purchase nutritious food from food retailers and farmers markets. The webpage provides information about how to apply for SNAP benefits and about food retailers and farmers markets that accept SNAP benefits. The page is available in English and Spanish.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) WIC provides nutrition assistance to pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women with low incomes that are at nutritional risk. WIC provides checks or vouchers for participants to purchase nutritious foods, nutrition counseling and education, and screening and referrals to other health, welfare, and social services. The webpage site provides information about how to apply for WIC benefits and information about WIC. The site is available in English and Spanish.

TIPS FOR A HEALTHY WEIGHT DURING PREGNANCY

Early Head Start staff can encourage women to gain the recommended amount of weight, which is based on their pre-pregnancy weight. Some women need to gain more or less than others. Early Head Start staff can advise women to check with their prenatal care health professionals about how much weight gain is right for them.

- **Underweight:** Total of about 28 to 40 pounds
- **Normal weight:** Total of about 25 to 35 pounds
- **Overweight:** Total of about 15 to 25 pounds
- **Obese:** Total of about 11 to 20 pounds



RESOURCES

Share Our Strength. Cooking Matters. This webpage provides information to help families shop for and cook healthy meals on a budget. It includes healthy recipes, tips, and videos.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. Pregnancy & Breastfeeding: Health & Nutrition. This webpage provides information about nutritional needs and tips for healthy weight gain during pregnancy. The tool Daily Food Plans for Moms allows pregnant women to enter information about themselves to create a personalized daily eating plan.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. Tips for Pregnant Moms. 2013. This fact sheet helps women make healthy food choices, plan meals, and stay physically active during pregnancy. The fact sheet is written in English and Spanish.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Food and Drug Administration. 2011. Food Safety for Pregnant Women. This booklet provides guidance for pregnant women on how to reduce the risk of food-borne illness.

Fostering a culture of health and wellness for Head Start children, families, and staff.

NATIONAL CENTER ON HEALTH

Our Goal:

To help Head Start and Early Head Start programs implement best practices and effective approaches within medical and dental care access, health awareness, healthy active living, emergency preparedness, and environmental safety to support healthy outcomes and school readiness for young children and their families.

CONTACT US!

The National Center on Health welcomes your feedback on this newsletter issue as well as your suggestions for topics for future issues. Please forward your comments to nchinfo@aap.org or call (888) 227-5125.

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