



# Family Well-Being: Prenatal Care Tip Sheet

For Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS); Refugee Resettlement; Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS); Early Care and Education Providers

All providers can work alongside families to explore prenatal care and maintaining a healthy lifestyle during pregnancy. This Prenatal Care Tip Sheet corresponds to page 1 of the [Raising Young Children in a New Country: Supporting Early Learning and](#)

[Healthy Development Handbook](#).

**Conversation Starters:** (or staff, families, and partners can design program-specific questions)

- How do families prepare for a new baby in your culture?
- Describe traditions and important practices that women and families follow during pregnancy.
- What are sources of support that you use during pregnancy?

## Cultural Considerations:

- Recent refugee arrivals may be more focused on critical needs (e.g., food, shelter, income) than on broader concepts of health and family well-being.
- Sometimes women from cultures with more gender separation may be more comfortable with female professionals for OB/GYN care.
- Prenatal vitamins and information on healthy prenatal care may not have been available to some refugee women, due to limited access to healthcare.
- Some Muslim women may prefer prenatal vitamins in tablet form, as gelatin capsules may contain pork products.
- Pregnancy and childbirth may be seen as a normal part of life, rather than as a medical event. Prior to arrival in the U.S., some mothers may not have given birth in a hospital.
- Some mothers may have specific concerns about cesarean sections, which are more common in the U.S., and because they may be more associated with death in the mother's home country.
- Newly arrived families may need assistance arranging transportation to doctor's visits, or they may need help accessing public transportation.



## Remember to Mention:

- Pregnant mothers need healthy foods that are high in vitamin C, folic acid, calcium, and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)—a type of omega-3—all of which are critical for the baby's growth and brain development.
- Foods to be avoided during pregnancy include raw or undercooked eggs and meat; products with unpasteurized milk (e.g., some soft cheeses); caffeinated drinks; and fish and shellfish with high levels of mercury (e.g., Shark, King Mackerel, Swordfish, or Tilefish.)
- Drinking alcohol, smoking, or breathing second-hand smoke during pregnancy or while breastfeeding can harm the baby's brain and development, as well as the mother's health.
- Check with a doctor about using certain medications while pregnant.
- Adults and children may work together to help prepare for the baby's arrival (e.g., father learning prenatal development, children practicing songs to sing to new baby).



# Family Well-Being: Prenatal Care Tip Sheet (cont'd)

## Applicable Head Start Program Performance Standards:

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/Head%20Start%20Requirements/1304>  
45 CFR 1304.40 Family partnerships (f)(1) and (2)(i)(ii)(iii)  
45 CFR 1304.23 Child nutrition (a)(4)

## Resources on ECKLC:

### Early Head Start National Resource Center

- *17th Annual Virtual Birth to Three Institute: Webinar B3*  
**Prenatal Development: Laying the Foundation for School Readiness**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/Early%20Head%20Start/family-engagement/expectant-families/PrenatalDevelopm.htm>
- **Sensitivity, Screening, and Support: Talking with Expectant Families about Substance Abuse.**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/Early%20Head%20Start/multimedia/audio-casts/SensitivityScre.htm>

### National Center of Health

- **Nutrition Tips for a Healthy Pregnancy**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/health-literacy-family-engagement/prenatal-postpartum/duplicateNutriti.htm>
- **Pregnancy Quiz**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/health-literacy-family-engagement/prenatal-postpartum/PregnancyQuiz.htm>

## References:

American Pregnancy Association – Foods to avoid during pregnancy.

<http://www.americanpregnancy.org/pregnancyhealth/foodstoavoid.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Healthy pregnant or

postpartum women. <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/pregnancy.html>

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Women, Infants and Children. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/>

United States Environmental Protection Agency – Mercury: Fish Consumption Advice.

[http://water.epa.gov/scitech/swguidance/fishshellfish/outreach/advice\\_index.cfm](http://water.epa.gov/scitech/swguidance/fishshellfish/outreach/advice_index.cfm)

