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, anddocosahexaenoic 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 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).

Office of Head Start National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness Toll Free: 1.888.246.1975 • nccl@bankstreet.edu
Applicable Head Start Program Performance Standards:
http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/Head%20Start%20Requirements/1304
45 CFR1304.40 Family partnerships (f)(1) and (2)(i)(ii)(iii)
45 CFR1304.23 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


United States Environmental Protection Agency – Mercury: Fish Consumption Advice.
http://water.epa.gov/scitech/swguidance/fishshellfish/outreach/advice_index.cfm