

m e m o

DATE: April 7, 2021
TO: WIC Coordinators and LA Staff
FROM: Carole Kelnhofer, Training Coordinator
SUBJECT: Healthy Pregnancy Outcomes- Topic of the Month

About 70,000 babies are born in Minnesota every year. Roughly 18.5% of Minnesota's pregnant women are enrolled in the WIC program. For some, WIC is their first stop once they discover a new pregnancy. We can help our participants by supporting a healthy pregnancy from the start; the nutritious foods, education, and resources WIC provides may help to ensure the best possible outcome for mom and baby.

Steps to a Healthy Pregnancy

- **Healthy Habits:** Start healthy habits, annual health check-ups and folic acid supplementation before pregnancy.
- **Health Care:** Begin prenatal care early in the pregnancy and maintain regular healthcare visits.
- **Eat Well:** Follow a healthy diet with a balance of nutrient-dense foods.
- **Weight Changes:** Achieve a healthy rate of gain for the pregnancy and maintain a healthy weight between pregnancies.
- **Movement:** Maintain appropriate physical activity before, during, and after pregnancy.
- **Prenatal Vitamins:** Take prenatal vitamin supplements that contain iron, folic acid, and iodine daily.
- **Harmful Substances:** Avoid use of alcohol and nicotine, illegal drug use, abuse of prescription drugs and exposure to toxic substances.
- **Pregnancy Spacing:** Follow recommendations for healthy pregnancy spacing and avoid unintended pregnancies.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Preventing Pregnancy-Related Deaths](#), 700 women in the United States die each year from pregnancy or delivery complications. CDC created the [HEAR HER Campaign](#) to promote prevention of pregnancy-related deaths by raising awareness, providing supportive tools, and empowering all women to reach out and save lives. The campaign also hopes to encourage family members, caregivers, and providers to support pregnant and postpartum women by listening and acting when something doesn't feel right!

Risk Factors for Poor Pregnancy Outcomes

- **Existing Health Conditions:** Hypertension, diabetes, obesity, HIV/AIDs, and heart, thyroid, or kidney disease.
- **Age:** Teen pregnancy or first-time pregnancy over age 35.
- **Race:** Black and Indigenous women have 2-3 times the increased risk of pregnancy-related mortality.
- **Lifestyle Factors:** Lack of a healthy diet and exercise, low income, and alcohol, tobacco, or drug use.
- **Condition of Pregnancy:** Gestational diabetes, pre-eclampsia, multiple gestation, previous birth complications, birth defects or genetic conditions.
- **Healthcare:** Lack of adequate and consistent healthcare services before, during, and after pregnancy.

Healthy People 2030, [Pregnancy and Childbirth](#) included **19 baseline objectives for pregnancy and childbirth**. The goal is to prevent pregnancy related complications and maternal deaths and help women stay healthy through pregnancy into the postpartum period. The 19 objectives include strategies to help all women develop healthy habits and encourage regular medical care during their life span. Women in the United States have a greater risk of maternal death when compared to other high-income countries. Intervention is essential in reducing health disparities, ensuring health equity, and improving the overall health and well-being of all women.

The [Dietary Guideline for Americans 2020-2025](#) (DGAs) dedicated **Chapter 5** to women that are pregnant or lactating. By recognizing the importance of nutrition in pregnancy outcomes, the DGAs have highlighted specific dietary patterns and key nutrients to support infant growth and development and to maintain the mother's health. Special consideration is also given to a healthy weight status throughout the various stages of a woman's life. The DGAs further support healthy eating with referrals to programs such as the [Supplemental Nutrition Program \(SNAP\)](#), the [Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations \(FDPIR\)](#), and [Women, Infants & Children \(WIC\)](#).

Pregnancy and COVID-19

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), [Novel Coronavirus 2019 \(COVID 19\)](#) reading provided an update finding that pregnant women who are symptomatic with COVID-19 are at an increased risk of more severe complications. The CDC article, [Assessing Risk Factors for Severe COVID-19 Illness](#), also placed pregnant women in an "increased risk" category for COVID-19. Pregnant women with "other risk factors" may be at an even greater risk.

Educating pregnant participants on COVID-19 precautions should include following the advice of their health care provider. Encourage participants to have a plan in case they are exposed to the virus; discuss how they will access healthy foods, prenatal vitamins, and medications as needed. WIC benefits are currently loaded onto their card remotely; participants may be encouraged to designate a proxy that could shop for them if needed.

If a participant calls WIC and needs help, be sure you know the available resources your county has to offer so you may quickly get them to the right support services.

Pregnancy and the COVID-19 Vaccine

The CDC article, [Information about COVID-19 Vaccines for People who are Pregnancy or Breastfeeding](#), reported that limited data is available about the safety of vaccination against COVID-19 during pregnancy. Recommendations continue to include having a discussion with one's healthcare provider to determine the benefits and risks for each individual.

WIC can make a difference!

Numerous studies have shown that participation in WIC is associated with longer gestations, higher birth rates, and healthier infants. Supporting WIC participants begins with understanding their individual needs. [Why 1,000 Days](#) highlights the first 1,000 days as a window of opportunity; it includes a woman's pregnancy and goes until the second year of life. We can help support a healthy pregnancy outcome with encouraging both parents to build a healthy attachment to the developing fetus from the start.

Things to consider:

- Explore the participant's feelings about pregnancy and changes to the body.
- Assess stressors that can affect the pregnancy; does the participant have a safe place to stay, access to healthy foods, adequate medical care, and social support.
- Encourage healthy habits for the pregnancy and explore thoughts on how baby is developing at different stages.
- Encourage both parents to connect with the fetus; read to, talk to, and touch the belly.
- Explore referrals/resources for access to services as appropriate, based on an individualized need.
- Read notes/alerts from last appointment; follow up on any concerns that may have been discussed in the past.

By using [PCS Counseling Skills](#), we are better able to tailor education and referrals. Staying informed will aid in your ability to provide the most accurate and up to date information to participants. Staff may also use tools developed specifically to hone their skills in counseling and educating pregnant women.

Tools to Review:

- [Training Tool for Pregnant Woman Assessment Questions](#)
- [Maternal/Child/Infant Nutrition Modules](#)- Maternal Nutrition Modules.
- [Nutrition Information- English](#)- Pregnancy, Breastfeeding, and General Nutrition Education cards.

IMPORTANT: Early and adequate access to healthcare matters! Any woman who discovers they are pregnant or wishes to become pregnant should be encouraged to seek out the care of a healthcare professional who can monitor their health status before, during, and after pregnancy.

Staff Training Suggestion

Group Activity-

Review: Read through the list of Healthy People 2030, [Pregnancy and Childbirth](#) 19 baseline objectives.

Discuss: Break into small groups and pick one objective each to discuss the impact WIC has on working to meet this goal. Click to open the objective and read through the “**Summary**”.

- Consider the ways that education and counseling can help to support meeting the goal.
- Consider the resources WIC may share to offer additional support to parents.

Share: Return to the larger group and share the chosen objective and summarize the group discussion.

No group, No problem-

Review: Read through the list of Healthy People 2030, [Pregnancy and Childbirth](#) 19 baseline objectives.

Choose: Pick a 2-3 of the baseline objectives. Click to open the objective and read through the “**Summary**”.

- Consider the ways that education and counseling can help to support meeting the goal.
- Consider the resources WIC may share to offer additional support to parents.

Share: Contact a co-worker or friend to discuss the chosen objectives and any thoughts generated.

Please continue to send training topic suggestions and feedback to Carole Kelnhofer at carole.kelnhofer@state.mn.us.

Reference - Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[Preventing Pregnancy- Related Deaths](https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/preventing-pregnancy-related-deaths.html) (https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/preventing-pregnancy-related-deaths.html)

[HEAR HER Campaign](https://www.cdc.gov/hearher/index.html) (https://www.cdc.gov/hearher/index.html)

[Pregnancy and Childbirth](https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/pregnancy-and-childbirth) (https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/pregnancy-and-childbirth)

[Dietary Guideline for Americans 2020-2025](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/Dietary_Guidelines_for_Americans_2020-2025.pdf)
(https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/Dietary_Guidelines_for_Americans_2020-2025.pdf)

[Supplemental Nutrition Program \(SNAP\)](https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/adults/economic-assistance/food-nutrition/programs-and-services/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program.jsp) (https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/adults/economic-assistance/food-nutrition/programs-and-services/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program.jsp)

[Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations \(FDPIR\)](https://www.fns.usda.gov/fdpir/food-distribution-program-indian-reservations)

(<https://www.fns.usda.gov/fdpir/food-distribution-program-indian-reservations>)

[Women, Infant & Child \(WIC\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/ppthome.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/ppthome.html>)

[Novel Coronavirus 2019 \(COVID 19\)](https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/practice-advisory/articles/2020/03/novel-coronavirus-2019) (<https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/practice-advisory/articles/2020/03/novel-coronavirus-2019>)

[Assessing Risk Factors for Severe COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/assessing-risk-factors.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/assessing-risk-factors.html>)

[Information about COVID-19 vaccines for People who are Pregnancy or Breastfeeding](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html)
(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html>)

[Why 1,000 Days](https://thousanddays.org/why-1000-days/) (<https://thousanddays.org/why-1000-days/>)

[PCS Counseling Skills](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/pcs/skills/counseling.html)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/pcs/skills/counseling.html>)

[Training Tools for Pregnant Woman Assessment Questions](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/training/pcs/assessment/pregnant.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/training/pcs/assessment/pregnant.pdf>)

[Maternal/Child/Infant Nutrition Modules](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/nutrition/modules/index.html#maternal)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/nutrition/modules/index.html#maternal>)

[Nutrition Information - English](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/nutrition/morenutinfo.html)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/nutrition/morenutinfo.html>)

[Pregnancy and Childbirth](https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/pregnancy-and-childbirth) (<https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/pregnancy-and-childbirth>)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program 85 E 7th Place, PO BOX 64882, ST PAUL MN 55164-0882; 651-201-4444, wic.health@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us; To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-4444