Let's Talk About Seafood: The Impact of Messaging on Expecting and Breastfeeding Moms' Behavior

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Who We Are

*Expecting Health* is a team of key leaders in health communication and pregnancy and pediatric health, with a strong passion for **bridging actionable information with the everyday realities of women’s experiences and family lives.**

Born from Genetic Alliance, Expecting Health shares science-based and policy-informed information that reflects the lived experiences of individuals and their families.
We know that education and support don’t start or end at childbirth. Instead, a whole new set of shared support and needs emerge.

VISION

At Expecting Health, we believe that new and expecting families, regardless of makeup, income, or background, should and deserve to expect health.

We simply don’t think it needs to be this hard.

GOAL

To bridge science-based information and real life strategies to help parents and parents-to-be make informed decisions.
Our Approach

Using a person-centered approach to bridge the gap between (policies, science, health system) and (lived experience, consumer needs) to build a holistic/ inclusive approach to family health and development.
Why Messaging Matters...

Looking at How Moms and Families Search for Health Information

- Women are more likely than men to seek out health and illness information and answers related to specific symptoms and after visiting a doctor.¹

- Women are more likely to worry about getting more reliable information from the Internet.²

- Increasingly, moms turn to the Internet & social groups for trusted information.³

- While women increase their health and nutrition knowledge after searches, they are not as likely as men to seek medical attention or advice as a result of their search.⁴


² Ibid.


Steps in Effective Messaging

ASK YOURSELF:

WHO are trusted sources of information?

WHERE do your clients or members access information?

HOW do you gather professional/family/other perspectives?
Accessibility of the Message

- Tailor the content and the format for your reader
- Take the message recipient’s needs into account
- Consider social determinants, benefits, and barriers to executing the behavior
  - What is your reader going through?
- Segment the message based on specific audience
- Use the most relevant channels to reach your audience
- Put in place feedback loop to support iteration and improvement of message dissemination
What Makes Info Trustworthy?

- **Who?**
  - Who wrote it?
  - Who provided the facts?
  - Where did the facts come from?
  - Who paid for it?

- **When?**
  - When was it written or updated?

- **How?**
  - How do you know this information pertains to you?
  - Does the information seem reasonable based on what you’ve read or know?
Contradictory Messages in the Media: Examples of Conflicting Information
Exclusive Breastfeeding

- Exclusively breastfeed for six months
  “Infants should be exclusively breastfed – i.e. receive only breast milk – for the first six months of life to achieve optimal growth, development and health. "Exclusive breastfeeding" is defined as giving no other food or drink – not even water – except breast milk.”
  
  July 2015

- Six months of exclusive nursing is out of reach for many moms
  “Many studies have failed to differentiate between exclusive breastfeeding and any breastfeeding...
  “In developed countries, the immediate benefits of breastfeeding are not necessarily as clear-cut, because diarrheal disease is not a major cause of infant mortality here, Dr. Flaherman says.”

  December 2017
Sleep Training

- Start sleep training around 4 and 6 months, because that is when babies are ready
  May 2016

- Babies can not be trained and letting them cry is “torture”
  November 2016

- Pick up your baby every time they cry so they become happy, well adjusted adults
  February 2017

- Letting your baby cry it out is fine and is important to their development
  May 2016
Prolonged Skin-to-Skin Contact

- Prolonged SSC of low birthweight newborns led to lower mortality rates
  December 2015

- Prolonged SSC is the biggest risk factor for sudden unexpected postnatal collapse
  January 2016

- Babies can suffocate if they fall asleep on a parent’s chest
  August 2017
Bed Sharing

- Bed-sharing is dangerous
  “Bed-sharing may put your baby at risk for sudden infant death syndrome (also called SIDS) and other dangers during sleep, like suffocation. The safest place for your baby to sleep is in her own bassinet or crib placed close to your bed.”
  May 2015

- Bed-sharing improves breastfeeding
  “Bed-sharing works so well because breastfeeding mothers and babies are hardwired to be together during vulnerable sleep periods... the baby's happier and doesn't have to cry... and [mom] doesn't have to get out of bed - she just latches and maybe even falls back to sleep.”
  August 2014
Safe Sleep Conditions

- Place your baby on its back when putting them to sleep. "The single most effective action that parents and caregivers can take to lower a baby's risk of SIDS is to place the baby to sleep on his or her back for naps and at night. Compared with back sleeping, stomach sleeping carries between 1.7 and 12.9 times the risk of SIDS."

- Reposition your baby to avoid SIDS and plagiocephaly (flat head syndrome). "Experts have noticed a fivefold increase in misshapen heads since then... Avoid leaving your baby for extended periods of time in a car seat, infant seat, baby swing, baby carrier, or other place where her head is likely to rest on the same spot."

July 2016
Pacifier Use

- Pacifiers may reduce the risk of SIDS, but can cause ear infections
  "Pacifier use during naps or nighttime can prevent sudden infant death syndrome. Doctors aren’t sure how it works, but if you give your baby a pacifier while they’re asleep, you might lower their risk of SIDS by more than half. According to one study, children who use pacifiers are almost twice as likely to get multiple ear infections as children who don’t."

  July 2015

- Pacifiers may or may not create breast feeding problems
  "Some research links pacifier use to less frequent breast-feeding or the ending of breast-feeding after only a few months in certain babies. However, a review of unrestricted pacifier use in healthy, full-term infants found that it had no impact on the continuation of breast-feeding."

  July 2017
How Do You Craft Trusted, Accurate, and Actionable Messages?
Communicating the Benefits of Seafood in Pregnancy – A Case Study
Why this Topic During the Perinatal Period?

- Concern that pregnant women are missing out on important nutrients for themselves and their baby

- Seafood is critical for infant brain and eye development

- Americans (especially pregnant women) do not consume enough fish and seafood for optimal benefit

- Connection to the federal process and healthcare providers/influencers: how can we give pregnant and breastfeeding women the best advice?

- Nearly than 4 million births/year in the U.S. (in 2014, 62% qualified for WIC)

History of Education Around Fish and Seafood During Pregnancy

- FDA What You Need to Know About Mercury in Fish and Shellfish
- Draft FDA Net Effect Report
- 2010 DGA
- DRAFT Updated FDA/EPA Advice
- 2015 DGA
- FINAL Revised FDA/EPA Advice
- IOM Seafood Choices: Balancing Benefits and Risks
- FAO/WHO Risk and Benefit Report
- Winter 2004
- Fall 2006
- Winter 2009
- Winter 2011
- Summer 2014
- Winter 2016
- Winter 2017
- Winter 2018
- Signing of FDA/EPA Advice
Pregnancy is a time for psychological, cognitive, and behavioral changes and women are more likely to change routines and behaviors in pregnancy than at any other time in their lives.

Women are searching for health information during pregnancy, with intentions of embracing healthy behaviors to give their baby the healthiest start in life.

Pregnant women rely heavily on their healthcare provider for clear and consistent information and affirmation of what they learn in the community.

**OPPORTUNITY**

Simple, clear, and positive language can make a difference
Expecting Health Efforts

- Partnership with FDA & other federal agencies
- Educational meetings with legislators
- Convene and partner with key nutrition experts/researchers
- Manage the Perinatal Nutrition Collaborative
  - Provider and consumer-facing organizational leaders in perinatal health
  - Clinician representatives
  - Nutrition organizational leaders
- Material development and other dissemination (webinars, blogs)
2017 Advice: Room for Growth

Top Concerns

1. No mention of omega-3s or their role in boosting brain development

2. 62 species of fish categorized into multiple unclear lists

3. Gives impression seafood should not be given to children younger than two years old

4. No consumer testing and no interagency review

Why?

Because omega-3s are essential for optimal brain development, and the brain is so rapidly developing between 0-2, there is a real risk of harm from unnecessarily delayed introduction of seafood. From an allergy standpoint, the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests no such delay once solids are started at around 6 months.
A Better Way to Talk About Seafood

- Clear, consumer-friendly language about the benefits of eating fish for mom and baby is imperative for helping pregnant women understand they can—and should—enjoy fish and seafood during pregnancy.
  - Communicate the unique nutrition attributes of fish such as omega-3s

- Focus on the empowering! (without convoluted lists)
  - Studies show that fish lists (eat this, not that…) discourage consumption and create confusion. Guidance about the four fish to avoid should be explained in the context that all other varieties of commercially-available fish are safe to eat.

- Keep messaging simple and easy to understand
  - Make messaging relevant to moms-to-be and their life circumstances
  - Share tangible ideas for obtaining and preparing fish and seafood

- Positive and action-oriented language is helpful for healthcare professionals to speak confidently to their clients and patients
The Pregnant Woman’s Guide to Eating Seafood

Delicious Fish for You and Your Baby
Eating seafood is a great way to get important nutrients for you and your baby during pregnancy. Seafood is one of the only foods rich in a healthy fatty acid called omega-3 DHA. Omega-3 DHA is the best possible nutrient for your baby’s brain and eye development.

Other nutrients found in seafood — including calcium, protein, vitamin D and iron — help build healthy bones and muscles. This guide will show you tasty ways to meet your seafood needs so you and your baby can get the many health benefits of fish.

When you are pregnant, aim to eat a variety of cooked seafood 2-3 times each week.

ARE SEAFOOD AND FISH THE SAME?
Both words are used in this guide to mean all seafood, including fish and shellfish.

Research shows that moms-to-be who eat fish 2-3 times each week during pregnancy have babies who reach these milestones more quickly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6 Months</th>
<th>18 Months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copy sounds</td>
<td>Climb stairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold up head</td>
<td>Drink from a cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize family</td>
<td>Draw</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The most popular types of seafood in the U.S. are all safe and healthy to eat during pregnancy.

Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding can eat both white (albacore) and light canned/pouched tuna, as part of a variety of their 2-3 servings of seafood each week.

- Shark
- Swordfish
- King mackerel
- Tilefish
- Bigeye tuna (found in sushi)
- Marlin
- Orange roughy

Most Americans do not typically eat these fish, and there are many other seafood options you can enjoy.

For the general population, there are no types of commercial seafood to avoid.

Simply eat 2-3 servings of a variety of seafood each week.
Meal Planner Ideas for Lunch, Dinner and Snacks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lunch</th>
<th>Dinner</th>
<th>Snacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TILAPIA NACHOS</strong>&lt;br&gt;Tortilla chips + Tilapia + Shredded cheese + Mango salsa + Guacamole</td>
<td><strong>SALMON MAC-N-CHEESE</strong>&lt;br&gt;Mac-n-cheese + Salmon + Broccoli</td>
<td><strong>TUNA SALAD</strong>&lt;br&gt;Tuna + Mayonnaise or yogurt + Dried cranberries + Apple slices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TROUT RICE BOWL</strong>&lt;br&gt;Trout + Olive oil + Lemon + Wild rice + Asparagus</td>
<td><strong>CLAM PIZZA</strong>&lt;br&gt;Canned clams + Kale + Mozzarella Cheese + Olive Oil + Whole grain pizza dough</td>
<td><strong>CRAB QUESADILLA</strong>&lt;br&gt;Canned crab + Cheddar Cheese + Avocado + 2 Corn tortillas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SHRIMP PASTA</strong>&lt;br&gt;Shrimp + Feta cheese + Cherry tomatoes + Whole wheat pasta + Spinach</td>
<td><strong>ROASTED SALMON &amp; VEGGIES</strong>&lt;br&gt;Salmon + Honey glaze + Sweet potato + Cauliflower</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After Your Baby Arrives

While you’re adjusting to your new life and little one, it may seem tough to eat well and care for a newborn. The following tips will help nourish you and your baby when you are breastfeeding.

**Breastfeeding moms need about 500 extra calories a day, but let hunger be your guide.**

**Aim to drink non-sweetened beverages like water (toss in fruit for flavor) each time you nurse your baby.**

**Breastfeeding moms need plenty of protein and healthy omega-3 fats. A tasty way to get both is to eat 2-3 seafood meals each week.**

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As Your Baby Grows

Pediatricians recommend **introducing soft, solid foods, including fish, into your child’s diet around 6 months**. Unless your family has a history of food allergies, the latest science shows there is no need to delay the introduction of fish beyond 6 months. Offer your baby one new food at a time, and wait a few days to watch for any allergic reactions before introducing another food.

By introducing healthy foods to your child early on, you are helping your child develop good habits for later in life. One of these habits is eating seafood regularly. **Children should eat 2-3 servings of seafood each week** in age-appropriate portions to match their calorie needs.

**Sources:**
- Scientific Report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee
- Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020
- Institute of Medicine
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics