Intervention strategies to improve nutrition and health behaviour during pregnancy

Angela de Silva
Regional Adviser,
Nutrition and Health for Development
WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia
Increasing double burden of malnutrition in many countries: intervention strategies need to expand to cover all forms of malnutrition

Trends in thinness (BMI < 18.5 kg/m²), overweight (BMI ≥ 25 kg/m²), and obesity (BMI ≥ 30 kg/m²), (population weighted average prevalence for women aged 20–49 years globally, 1980–2008)

To improve nutrition and health behaviours in pregnancy

- Strengthen health systems – primary care
- Strengthen multisectoral coordination and actions
- Strengthen community structures
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence based interventions for nutrition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counselling on healthy eating and physical activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In undernourished populations nutrition education on energy and protein intake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In undernourished populations, balanced energy &amp; protein dietary supplements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily iron and folic acid supplementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcium supplementation to prevent eclampsia in low Ca intake settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A supplementation only if severe public health problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventive anthelminthic treatment, intermittent preventive treatment of malaria in pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment for nausea/vomiting, heartburn, cramps, constipation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strengthen primary health care to deliver integrated nutrition and health interventions: improve coverage and quality of services

- **Implementation of nutrition interventions targeting pregnant/lactating women in 82 countries**

  - **AFR (n=20)**
  - **AMR (n=10)**
  - **EMR (n=11)**
  - **EUR (N=21)**
  - **SEAR (N=9)**
  - **WPR (N=11)**
  - **Total (N=82)**

- **Inclusion of action areas related to pregnancy nutrition in national policies in 167 countries**
  - Counselling on healthy diet during pregnancy
  - Nutrition education on dietary diversity and consumption of micronutrient-rich food
  - Deworming for soil transmitted helminths
  - Micronutrient supplementation
Effective delivery, coverage and quality of nutrition interventions is essential to address both ends of the maternal malnutrition spectrum

- Identifying and utilizing opportunities – integrated service delivery points to address both under and overnutrition (e.g. ANC, WASH, NCD).

- Packaging interventions increases efficiency and impact: health workers (often midwife /MCH worker), single communication channels to deliver multiple interventions/messages.

- Empowered healthcare providers - build capacity

Implementation research - e.g. country specific models of health service delivery, supply chain models, targeted interventions
Community based strategies to empower women, family and communities for optimum nutrition and care during pregnancy

- Education - e.g. importance and nutritional quality of locally available, culturally accepted low cost foods
- Food beliefs, cultural perceptions, myths (e.g. physical activity during pregnancy, food prep)
- Promoting healthcare access, birth spacing, family size
- Women’s empowerment, access to resources, decision making
- Motivation of male partners to help with workload, accompany woman to the clinic, intra household food distribution

Strengthen community structures

Mother support groups

Advocacy and engagement with community leaders

Engaging with traditional birth attendants

Innovative models for urban areas
Policy coherence of different sectors to ensure synergistic actions towards multiple maternal nutrition challenges

- Agriculture: nutrition security, availability and access to healthy diets
- Education
- Infrastructure: transport, urban planning
- Water & sanitation
- Social protection
- Industry, trade: regulating the food environment
- Finance: Fiscal policies to support healthy diets
- Labour: equity and rights
Current policy status (Global Nutrition Policy Review 2016)
Thank you

- Advocacy with policymakers
- Guidelines and tools
- Sharing of best practices
- Further research