



Discussion for use with Expecting and New Parents

(22-27 minutes)

1. Activity: Child Safety Questionnaire (5 minutes).

- Have participants fill out the “Child Safety Questionnaire” found in participant packets.
- After all are finished, discuss each question.
- Refer to the answer key provided.

2. Discussion: Safety during pregnancy (5 minutes).

Say: *“Hormonal changes during pregnancy make it difficult for women to fight off infections, including food-borne illnesses. Some organisms can cross through the placenta, putting the developing baby at risk.”*

Ask: *“What are some foods women need to avoid during pregnancy?”*

- List participants’ responses on flip chart or overhead.

Examples:

- Fish that may contain high levels of mercury – Large fish: shark, swordfish, king mackerel. Game fish: bass, trout, salmon (check game fish with your local health department before consuming)
- Raw or undercooked meats and fish (Salmonella or Listeria)
- Hot dogs or luncheon meat (Listeria)
- Foods made with raw or undercooked eggs (Salmonella)
- Soft cheeses made with unpasteurized milk, including Brie, Feta, blue cheese, and Roquefort (Listeria)
- Refrigerated meat spreads – canned versions are okay (Listeria)
- Unpasteurized milk, juices, or ciders (Listeria)
- Vegetable sprouts (Salmonella)
- Herbal supplements and teas (lack of studies on the effect of herbs on a developing fetus – talk with doctor or midwife)

Ask: *“What are some other general food safety tips to keep in mind?”*

Examples:

- Wash hands often, especially after changing diapers, handling pets or other animals, going to the bathroom, or working with soil.
- Be sure your refrigerator is set to between 35 and 40 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Use a meat thermometer to make sure that meats are cooked to the proper temperature.

Ask: *“In addition to monitoring what they eat, what are some other things women should avoid during pregnancy?”*

Say: *“**Smoking during pregnancy** – Women who smoke during pregnancy risk having problems with their placentas. They are also more likely than non-smokers to have a baby born earlier and that is smaller than it should be. After the baby is born, parents should avoid smoking in the home because second-hand smoke puts babies at risk for ear infections and respiratory problems. Babies whose mothers smoked during pregnancy are as much as three times as likely to die of SIDS.*

Alcohol – *Many women do not realize that even light drinking during pregnancy increases the risk for serious physical and mental birth defects. Pregnant women who drink also risk miscarriage, have a low-birthweight baby, or a stillbirth. Alcohol also passes into breastmilk, so breastfeeding mothers need to limit drinking as well.*

Other drugs – *Any illegal drugs can be harmful to your baby. Before taking any over-the-counter medicine, check with your doctor.*

Caffeine – *Having a lot of caffeine may increase a woman’s risk of miscarriage or of having a low-birthweight baby. Most experts believe that it is safe to drink small amounts of caffeine (about one to two 8-oz cups of coffee a day). Until there is more evidence, the less you consume the better. If you breastfeed your baby, you should continue to limit how much caffeine you have because a small amount does pass through to your breast milk. If you drink too much caffeine, your baby may be more irritable or have difficulty sleeping.*

🗨️ **Litter boxes** – Due to a risk of toxoplasmosis, pregnant women should have a family member or friend clean the litter box. Toxoplasmosis can also come from eating undercooked meats or fruits and vegetables that have not been washed.

🗨️ **Hot tubs** – It is generally considered unsafe for a pregnant woman to have a body temperature of 102.2 degrees Fahrenheit or above, especially during the first trimester. Hot tub temperatures are often set at 104, and it takes only about 10 to 20 minutes in a hot tub to raise one's body temperature to 102 or higher. It is safer to relax in a hot bath because most of the upper body remains out of the water. Also, unlike hot tubs, the water temperature of a bath gradually cools, making it less likely for a person to overheat.”

3. Discussion: Safety and newborns (7-10 minutes).

Ask: “Does anyone know the leading cause of preventable deaths in babies under 1 year?” **Answer:** Suffocation

- Explain that one of the best ways to prevent suffocation in newborns is to carefully monitor where and how a baby sleeps.

Ask: “What are some things to consider when we put babies down to sleep?”

- Write answers on flip chart or dry erase board. Following are some important things to discuss:

1. **Babies should sleep on their backs** (unless instructed otherwise by a doctor)

- Be sure grandparents and other older caregivers know, because many were probably taught that babies should sleep on their tummies. However, recent medical evidence suggests that sleeping on the back is the safest position because it greatly reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) – the sudden death of an otherwise healthy baby.
- Current research indicates that there is no risk of babies choking on their spit up when sleeping on their backs. Babies are also less likely to spit up when placed on their backs.

- *Some babies don't like to sleep on their backs, but if you swaddle them they will feel more secure.*
- *Some parents worry that babies will get flat spots on their heads if they sleep on their backs. Getting plenty of tummy time when awake and supervised can help reduce the risk of flat spots on your baby's head, and this also helps your baby's motor development.*

2. Safest place for babies to sleep is in a crib or bassinet.

- *Mattress should be firm and snug-fitting with no space around the edges. Cribs should be certified by the Juvenile Product Manufacturers Association (JPMA).*
- *The bed should be free of pillows, soft toys or stuffed animals, and blankets or quilts.*
- *Dress baby warmly, but not too warm. If you cover your baby, use a small, light blanket or sheet that is pulled no higher than his or her chest.*
- *Never place a baby on a soft quilt or comforter, pillow, water bed, furniture cushions, or large soft toys due to a risk of suffocation.*
- *Remove hanging crib toys like crib gyms and mobiles once your baby is able to push up.*
- *Cribs should be away from windows to avoid the risk of getting caught in the window covering cords and from falling out of the window as he or she grows.*
- *Use fitted sheets designed for cribs, because those for twin-sized beds are too big.*

3. Play pens

- *Mesh weave should be less than 1/4" in size and should not have any tears, holes, or loose strings.*
- *Never leave babies in play pens with the drop sides down. Securely lock sides in the open position so they cannot collapse on your baby. When play pen is out, be sure sides are locked in*

position so baby cannot crawl back on it and get fingers caught in the hinge.

- *Use fitted sheets made for play pens, because those for cribs and adult beds are too big.*
- *Avoid making older babies stay in play pen to play for long periods of time – they need to get out and explore!*

4. Activity and Discussion: Babies and food safety (5-7 minutes).

- Distribute the “Babies and Food Safety” handout.
 - Give participants a moment to complete it.
 - Ask why they think some foods are safe and why others are not.
-  **Say:** *“The correct answer is that **none of these foods is safe for babies under one year.** The **primary concern with some of the foods is choking.** Once your baby is ready to eat adult foods, be sure to cut these foods into small chunks or slices – especially foods like grapes, raw carrots, hot dogs, and apples. You should **NEVER** give babies or toddlers foods like hard candies, nuts, marshmallows, popcorn, and raw celery. The **problem with the other foods is food allergies.**”*
- Read through the following: (Following is a list of some of the most common concerns, but it is not all-inclusive.)
 - **Honey** – Although it has many potential health benefits for older children and adults, honey should **NEVER** be given to a baby **until** he or she is **at least 1 year** old. It may contain **botulism-causing bacteria**, which can be harmful because **babies’ digestive systems are still immature** and cannot kill botulism germs. **Even very small amounts** of honey can be harmful, and in rare occasions may even be fatal. So never put honey on a pacifier or anything else that you put in your baby’s mouth.
 - **Egg whites** – Babies should not eat egg whites or whole eggs until they are at least 1 year old due to a **risk of food allergies to egg white proteins.** Some doctors say babies can start eating egg yolks around 8 months, but not egg whites. Talk with your doctor if there is a family history of egg white allergies. Always remember that eggs should be fully cooked to reduce the risk of Salmonella.

- **Cow's milk** – Giving cow's milk to babies under one year is discouraged due to the potential for **allergies** and also a **risk of iron deficiency anemia**. Unless your baby has a food allergy to milk, milk products like yogurt and cheese are okay after babies are about 9 months old.
- **Nuts and peanut butter** – **Peanut and other nut allergies** are becoming increasingly common in children, so wait until your baby's first birthday before offering any product containing peanuts or other nuts. Be sure to spread it thinly to reduce the risk of choking. If there is a family history with nut allergies, talk to your doctor before feeding your baby nuts even after 1 year.
- **Fish and shellfish** – Although these contain important nutrients, it is important to limit the amount of fish given to **babies and young children, as well as expectant and breastfeeding mothers, due to mercury**. Large fish like shark and swordfish should be avoided altogether because they contain high levels of mercury. Intake of other fish should be limited to about two meals per week.
- **Chocolate** – Because it **contains caffeine**, chocolate should not be given to babies. It can make them jittery and can also interfere with calcium absorption.

Refer back to the Safety and Health lesson plan and the activity, “To childproof or not to childproof.”

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