



# MOM

## MATTERS OF MOTHERHOOD

A Nutrition Newsletter from K-State Research & Extension

Department of Human Nutrition  
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### Core Nutrition Messages Make “Teachable Moments” Consistent

Nutrition educators are challenged with paring their message down to the meaningful few words and ideas that truly target key concepts. Now USDA and the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) offer a set of tested messages for use with low-income mothers and children.

The 16 core nutrition messages address five concepts. Seven messages are aimed at mothers of preschoolers, four for moms of elementary school-age children, and five geared toward 8 to 10-year-old children. The resource also provides background information, an overview of the developmental approach, suggestions for implementation and evaluation guidance.

The messages were developed through a collaborative effort of nutrition and communication experts representing several key stakeholders, including the School Nutrition Association, National WIC Association, public health nutrition directors, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the academic community. The messages and accompanying tips were tested with low-income mothers and children in 30 focus groups across the US.

How will these messages help in your work? They should help us easily send an effective message to our audience. The messages reflect what we want to say, and the wording is provided! For example, there are “Division of Feeding Responsibility” messages and “Cooking and Eating Together” messages for mothers of preschoolers. The content will ring familiar to FCS agents and nutrition educators. Several messages, including “Cook together. Eat together. Talk together. Make mealtime a family time,” are reflected throughout our curricula. By using the tested messages, we can be certain we are reaching the youth and families in our programs.

You can get the publication “Maximizing the Message: Helping Moms and Kids Make Healthier Food Choices” from the FNS website at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/corenutritionmessages/default.html>

### Resources You Can Use: Newsletter Targets Childcare Providers

Many Extension agents and educators provide programming for childcare providers. Here is a link to Better Kid Care, a free e-newsletter from Penn State that is research-based and directed toward the childcare audience. If you are interested in receiving the newsletter, note the “subscribe” button in the upper right corner. <http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu/page13.html>

### MOM News This Issue:

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“Ask MOM”

- Is it safe for a pregnant woman to take fish oil capsules?

“A Healthy Mouth for Your Baby”

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## “Ask MOM”

In this issue of Matters of Motherhood, we are introducing a new column “Ask MOM” will bring frequently asked questions – and research-based answers! – to you, the nutrition educator. Got questions? Ask MOM!

*Q: Is it safe for a pregnant woman to take fish oil capsules?*

**MOM’s reply:** This is a timely question, as there is much media coverage right now on the benefits and drawbacks of fish in the diet of pregnant and lactating women. Fish oil contains both docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), two omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids are found not only in fish (particularly fish oil), but also in certain plant/nut oils. Some nuts (English walnuts) and plant oils (canola, soybean flaxseed/linseed and olive oil) contain alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), another omega-3 fatty acid.

Many studies have found benefits related to omega-3 fatty acid intake during pregnancy. Infants showed improved problem-solving skills, but not memory, if their mothers consumed DHA-containing functional foods during pregnancy. Other research suggests that DHA

supplementation during pregnancy plays an important role in the development of the infant’s visual system. A 2007 study in Australia concluded that fish oil supplementation during pregnancy may be associated with increased EPA and DHA levels in breastmilk during lactation, and increased infant DHA status.



The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends the consumption of two servings (about 8 ounces) of fish, especially oily fish, a week. Pregnant or breastfeeding women, and children, are advised to consume fish that are lower in mercury, such as shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock and catfish. The omega-3 fatty acids in many types of fish – especially salmon and tuna – promote healthy fetal growth and development.

**The bottom line:** Research is continuing regarding fish oil supplementation during pregnancy. It is important to remember that fish oil supplements are not uniformly tested for effectiveness or

contamination. Pregnant women should discuss any dietary supplement they are considering with their health care provider.

Source: MayoClinic.com. Pregnancy and fish: What’s too little – or too much? Accessed at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/pregnancy-and-fish/PR00158> on 2/9/09.

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## “A Healthy Mouth for Your Baby” Available at No Charge

Good nutrition plays a big role in keeping baby’s mouth healthy. This 8-page booklet is written easy-to-read and addresses not only healthy food choices and prevention of baby bottle tooth decay, but also the issues of fluoride, infant teeth cleaning and baby’s first visit to the dentist.

Developed and distributed by the National Oral Health Information Clearinghouse and the National Institutes of Health, “A Healthy Mouth for Your Baby” is available in Spanish and English. Orders of up to 50 copies can be placed online at: <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OrderPublications/default.aspx>