

Postpartum Care- Topic of the Month

OCTOBER 5, 2022

Postpartum Initial Contact

The nutrition education provided during a WIC appointment supports the foundation of good nutritional health and empowers participants to make healthy choices throughout their lifespan. The initial postpartum visit is especially important!

Following the birth, this *“fourth trimester”* can present many challenges for a new parent including lack of sleep, fatigue, pain, breastfeeding difficulties, stress, new or onset mental health disorders, and urinary and/or stool disruptions.¹

During the initial postpartum nutrition assessment, we may identify ways that WIC can support the postpartum participant, including by offering breastfeeding support, tailoring the food package, and offering referrals as needed. Many new parents will have common concerns that you may feel equipped to address. We can further help to optimize the health of individual participants by tailoring our education and resources to meet their more specific needs.

Tips to offer new parents:

- Eat regular meals and snacks as able.
- Make healthy choices including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy options.
- Stay hydrated with enough water to quench your thirst.
- Sleep when your baby sleeps.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help if you have concerns or are feeling overwhelmed!

The nutrition assessment tools available to staff may help to guide the CPA through the initial postpartum visit. The tools offer example questions to help elicit conversation and probe for more information when needed. Review the training tools available below.

Staff tools for the postpartum nutrition assessment:

- [Training Tools for Postpartum Woman Assessment Questions](#)
- [Postpartum Woman- Complete Question Format](#)
- [Infant & Postpartum Brief Questions and Probes](#)

NEW Postpartum Module

The newly created [Postpartum Module](#) was developed to provide guidance on topics that are relevant to the postpartum participant. The module is currently in a read only format that may be used during the [WIC New Staff Training](#) or for review to sharpen existing skills. Later this year, the module will be recorded and made available for viewing.

Postpartum Exit Counseling

As outlined in MOM [Section 6.7 Additional Nutrition Education](#), Postpartum Exit Counseling should be provided to all breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding postpartum participants who will not be eligible for WIC *at the end of their current certification*. Exit counseling reinforces important health messages and the many benefits that participants received while participating in WIC during their pregnancy. The postpartum additional education contact is the most effective time to complete the postpartum exit counseling.

Exit counseling education should include:

- The importance of preconceptual folic acid intake for preventing birth defects and ways to get it through foods high in folic acid and a multivitamin.
- Encouragement to continue breastfeeding as the preferred method of infant feeding.
- The importance of keeping children's immunizations current.
- The health risks of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.
- The need for a well-balanced diet.
- Referrals as appropriate.

While the exit session should cover these main points, the discussion should always be tailored to the individual participant's needs. This education may also be accompanied by providing the [Stay Healthy](#) card. Be sure to document the contact and any materials and/or referrals provided to the participant.

Offering Referrals and Resources

Some participants may need more information surrounding a specific topic such as support for postpartum depression, miscarriage, or neonatal loss. WIC's role is to support the health and nutrition of our participants and to offer referrals or resources when we cannot address the participants more specific needs.

It is a good idea to review the referral process outlined in your agency and the resources that are currently available to meet a participant's need. Reach out to partner organizations and update your list of applicable resources that may be beneficial on a regular basis.

Resources

1. [Optimizing Postpartum Care](#)- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[Training Tools for Postpartum Woman Assessment Questions](#)

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

POSTPARTUM CARE- TOPIC OF THE MONTH

Postpartum Woman- Complete Question Format

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

Infant & Postpartum Brief Questions and Probes

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

Postpartum Module

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/training/nutrition/nst/postpartum.pdf>)

WIC New Staff Training

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

Section 6.7 Additional Nutrition Education

(https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch6/sctn6_7.pdf)

Stay Healthy

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/genstayhealthy.pdf>)

Optimizing Postpartum Care (<https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2018/05/optimizing-postpartum-care>)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 85 E 7th Place, PO BOX 64882, ST PAUL MN 55164-0882; 1-800-657-3942, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us; to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942.