

Individual Counseling – Your Healthy Pregnancy

Instruction Sheet

Individual counseling is recommended for participants who are not able to attend regularly scheduled Nutrition Education classes at the local WIC clinic. Individual counseling sessions should always be an option for any participant who prefers to have individualized attention and participants should never be discouraged from meeting their nutrition education contact requirements in this fashion. Individual Nutrition Education counseling is also recommended for WIC clinics that do not offer group Nutrition Education classes due to clinic size or clinic caseload such as clinics in rural communities or “clinics on wheels”.

The first step for conducting an individual counseling session of Your Healthy Pregnancy is to read the group lesson plan by the same title. Read the entire lesson plan and follow all activities outlined in it.

As noted in the Your Healthy Pregnancy group lesson plan, the objective of this counseling session is to dispel any myths surrounding exercise during pregnancy and to encourage physical activity during pregnancy. Exploring the topic of physical activity during pregnancy with WIC participants should be done while using the Nevada WIC CARES skills:

- Connecting with Families: building rapport with your participants, being friendly and respectful of their opinions and behaviors
- Asking Open-Ended Questions: using open-ended questions that are not judgmental to involve the participant in the nutrition education process
- Responsive Communication: allowing participants to express themselves, giving them enough time to talk and not dominating the conversation, summarizing
- Empowering Participants: seizing appropriate opportunities to make affirming statements
- Support with Follow-Up: work with the participant to determine next steps, plan, or offer a Nutrition Education opportunity that interests the participant

Your Healthy Pregnancy should be presented to pregnant participants who express interest in this topic either by selecting the “Being Active/Feeling Good” topic in the Prenatal Circle Chart, by not selecting any physical activity in question 19 of the Prenatal Women Health/Nutrition Questionnaire, or by asking any questions verbally about physical activity during pregnancy. Individual nutrition education counseling can be used during a certification or a nutrition education appointment. Please, keep in mind that in nutrition education only appointments you may need to refer back to the nutrition education questionnaire completed by the participant in their previous appointment.

Attached you will find the Your Healthy Pregnancy Worksheet. Go over this worksheet with the participant in your counseling session. Use it as a tool to explore the topic and to identify their thoughts and beliefs on the subject matter. A way of introducing the worksheet would be: “I noticed that you

didn't mark any physical activity in your questionnaire. In what kind of physical activities do you engage in most days? (wait for response) I see, so you're concerned about doing exercise while pregnant. I'd like to talk about this for a few minutes with you, if that is okay with you (wait for response) What have you heard about physical activity during pregnancy? (wait for response and circle any benefits mentioned)". This is a good opportunity to discover any myths about physical activity the participant might have heard. Engage in a conversation with her and share the information you have about physical activity during pregnancy with her.

The second question should be use to explore her thoughts on the types of physical activity she believes are safe for her. This will allow you to identify any misconceptions and to educate participants on the many different types of exercises that pregnant women can engage in.

The last question can be used to establish the Next Steps by exploring physical activities that might be enjoyable for her and her family. For example: "what forms of physical activity do you believe you and your family would enjoy doing? (wait for response and write answers on the lines provided) Would it be okay if I check with you in your next visit to see if you have been able to do some of these activities?"

Remember to keep this worksheet in the participant's chart and to follow-up on their next visit to see if any of the ideas explored have occurred or to talk about any barriers or difficulties that may be keeping the participant from engaging in physical activity. Remember that we are striving to provide a continuum of care and to empower and support our participants to achieve their own wellness goals.