

Abstract

“Can I Eat That?”—New Zealand Mothers’ Views of Pregnancy and Early-Life Nutrition Information [†]

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Abstract: Exposure to both poor nutrition and maternal stress during the earliest stages of life—from pre-conception until age two—have been identified as potential risk factors for the development of adult non-communicable disease. A booklet entitled “First 1000 Days: Nutrition Matters for Lifelong Health”, providing evidence-based maternal and infant dietary guidelines, has been distributed to pregnant women in Australia/New Zealand since 2016. This pilot study explored New Zealand mothers’ perceptions of the resource in conjunction with other nutrition information they received during pregnancy. First-time mothers (n = 9), recruited via social media and antenatal classes, attended semi-structured focus groups or one-on-one interviews in Auckland. Thematic analysis was used to identify three major themes in the data: 1. Differences in the mothers’ preferences for seeking and receiving nutrition information, depending on their apparent health literacy; 2. A strong focus on “forbidden foods” lists, highlighting a tendency for women to rely on perceived nutrition “rules” rather than evaluating guidance in the context of their personal circumstances when making food decisions; and 3. Feelings of pressure to comply with perceived “rules” and guilt or shame when unable to do so. We conclude that early-life nutrition resources should aim to provide a basis for discussion and personal risk assessment rather than a one-size-fits-all list of recommendations. Further consultation with parents and the wider community is recommended to develop a resource that assists in the healthy interpretation of nutrition guidelines during pregnancy and early life.

Keywords: education resources; knowledge translation; early-life; pregnancy; infancy



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