

HealthyStart

for Me and My Baby



Guide for Practitioners



HealthyStart

Healthy Start for Me and My Baby is one element of Healthy Start: A national capacity building strategy which aims to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for children whose parents have learning difficulties.

Healthy Start is an initiative of the Australian Supported Parenting Consortium (ASPC). The ASPC is a collaboration between the Parenting Research Centre and the Australian Family and Disability Studies Research Collaboration (Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney). Healthy Start is funded by the Australian Government under the Family Support Program (previously Stronger Families and Communities Strategy).

www.healthystart.net.au

Front cover by Peter Coles

©Australian Supported Parenting Consortium (2014)

This work is copyright. It may be reproduced in whole or part subject to the inclusion of an acknowledgement of the source and no commercial usage or sale. Reproduction for purposes other than those indicated above, require the prior written permission from the Australian Supported Parenting Consortium. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to Healthy Start, Parenting Research Centre, Lv 5, 232 Victoria Pde, East Melbourne VIC 3002 or email healthystart@parentingrc.org.au

ISBN 1 86487 840 1

HealthyStart

for Me and My Baby

Guide for Practitioners

Contents

Introduction	1
Components of the Resource	2
Special Features of <i>Healthy Start for Me and My Baby</i>	3
Using the Resource	4
Checking for Understanding.....	6
How was <i>Healthy Start for Me and My Baby</i> developed?	8
Pilot Study - Findings	10
Contributors	11

Introduction

Healthy Start for Me and My Baby is an interactive educational resource designed for pregnant women with learning difficulties. This includes women with intellectual impairment, and women who experience learning difficulties due to lifelong social, educational and health disadvantage.

Healthy Start for Me and My Baby is designed to complement current practice and promote the health and wellbeing of pregnant women with learning difficulties by

- providing accessible information about pregnancy and childbirth;
- promoting informed choice and participation in health care; and
- facilitating better communication with health professionals.

MESSAGES FROM RESEARCH

- Pregnant women with learning difficulties have difficulty sourcing, understanding and applying information about health and pregnancy.
- Pregnant women with learning difficulties suffer poorer health, including high stress and anxiety, and a high rate of pre-eclampsia.
- Pregnant women with learning difficulties are twice as likely to deliver pre-term; and, their babies are almost three times as likely to have low birth weights.

Components of the Resource

Healthy Start for Me and My Baby is a plain English book that has essential information on a wide range of topics.

The book has seven chapters covering topics from the first signs of pregnancy through to taking your newborn baby home.

Chapter 1 describes [Changes in You and Your Baby](#) during pregnancy.

Chapter 2 talks about [Pregnancy Care](#) including blood, urine and ultrasound checks.

Chapter 3 looks at [Caring for You and Your Baby](#), and covers a range of topics such as healthy eating, rest and exercise.

Chapter 4 focuses on [Things That Can Make You and Your Baby Sick](#), such as smoking, alcohol, pre-eclampsia and gestational diabetes.

Chapter 5 celebrates [Labour and Birth](#), from the signs of labour through to check-ups after the birth.

Chapter 6 is about [Going Home](#) with your newborn baby, and what to expect in those first few days and weeks.

Chapter 7 provides [Pregnancy Care Visits](#) worksheets.

Special Features of *Healthy Start for Me and My Baby*

- The book has an average reading level equivalent to Grade 5. Key points are summarised at the beginning of each chapter.
- The book makes extensive use of photos and illustrations to engage the reader, and to assist in conveying key messages.
- The book is action-oriented: chapters incorporate THINGS YOU CAN DO, for example, things you can do about back aches and constipation, or coping with your labour and the birth.
- The book encourages pregnant woman to interact with the material: there are questions and opportunities for women to document changes they notice, their feelings about their pregnancy, who they can turn to for support, and so on.
- The book encourages pregnant women to participate more fully in their health care and pregnancy consultations. Chapters contain 'question prompt sheets', that is, QUESTIONS YOU MAY LIKE TO ASK your midwife or doctor.
- Chapter 7 contains multiple copies of a 'worksheet' designed to help pregnant women prepare for - and get the most out of – their pregnancy care consultations. There is also space for the midwife or other health care practitioners to write down any special instructions.

Using the Resource

1. Before using *Healthy Start for Me and My Baby*, midwives and other health care practitioners need to identify pregnant women with learning difficulties. To do this, most practitioners will rely on their professional judgement, and one or more of the following questions for the mother:
 - Do you have any difficulties with learning?
 - Do you think you are slow at learning?
 - Did you receive any special help with learning at school?
 - Did you go to a special school or a support class in a regular school?

Research suggests that these simple questions are quite good at identifying pregnant women with learning difficulties.

2. The *Healthy Start for Me and My Baby* book is given to pregnant women with learning difficulties at their first pregnancy care visit - or at the first available opportunity. Midwives or other health care practitioners should clearly explain the purpose of this resource.

One way of explaining this resource to pregnant women with learning difficulties is by using the introduction on pages 6 – 10 of the book. [Try doing the exercises on pages 6, 11 and 12 together. These ask](#)

- ["What changes have you noticed?"](#)
- ["How do you feel today about having a baby?"](#)
- ["Who can you talk to about having a baby?"](#)

When explaining this resource to pregnant women with learning difficulties it is important to do the following:

- Encourage the recipient to write in the book.
- Show one of the "Questions you may like to ask" sections, and explain how these can be used to prepare for pregnancy care visits.
- Look at Chapter 7 together, and discuss how the worksheets can be used to prepare for pregnancy care visits.
- Encourage the recipient to bring the book with her to all future consultations.

Midwives and other health care practitioners are all too often hard pressed for time. It may be difficult to find the extra time needed to identify and explain this resource to pregnant women with learning difficulties. This investment of time has to be weighed up against the potential benefits. Note that some of this time may be returned to practitioners in future consultations through improved communication.

3. In future consultations with recipients, remember to ask

- Has the resource been useful, and if so, in what ways?
- Have you completed one of the worksheets in Chapter 7?

If so, look at this together.

- What questions would you like to ask?

Checking for Understanding

Sometimes the woman you are working with may agree with statements or say 'yes' to questions regardless of the content. This may occur because:

- She does not understand the question
- She does not understand the type of answer that is required
- She may not be easily able to remember information that would help her answer the question
- The judgements she is being asked to make may be too difficult for her at this time
- The question may be poorly phrased, too long or too complex

If you do not check that she has understood your conversation and the information you are giving her, she may not get the most out of your consultations and *Healthy Start for Me and My Baby*, and you may end up with an inaccurate understanding of her needs and the supports she may require.



Some tips for checking understanding:

- Use either/or questions instead of yes/no questions. An example of this is "Would it be better for you to drink lots of soft drink or lots of water?"
- Include an option of answering "I don't know" to questions and make sure she knows that it is ok to say this
- Keep questions short and simple
- Use some open-ended questions, e.g., "Tell me foods that are good to eat when you are pregnant"
- Avoid statements or questions that have too much detail or are too complex
- Ask factual questions that require immediate and concrete answers
- Ask her to explain a comment you have just made, or to tell you more about it, e.g., "Tell me what it may feel like when labour starts"
- Ask for examples to illustrate a comment
- Ask how she is going to do the task



How was *Healthy Start for Me and My Baby* developed?

Healthy Start for Me and My Baby is the outcome of genuine multidisciplinary collaboration, with significant participation of women and mothers with learning difficulties. Development involved:

- Review of relevant literature.
- Interviews with 40 pregnant women with learning difficulties.
- Contributions from over 30 members of the Expert Panel. Contributors are listed at the end of this Guide for Practitioners.

The development of *Healthy Start for Me and My Baby* is one element of a national strategy to promote a healthy start to life for young children of parents with learning difficulties. This national strategy is an initiative of the University of Sydney and the Parenting Research Centre, funded by the Australian Government, under the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.



For more information about *Healthy Start: A national strategy for children of parents with learning difficulties*, visit our website:

www.healthystart.net.au

Or contact the Australian Family and Disability Studies Research Collaboration, University of Sydney (www.sydney.edu.au/health-sciences/afdsr/) or the Parenting Research Centre (www.parentingrc.org.au)

Expert panel evaluation

A draft was evaluated by expert panel members using a brief questionnaire. The main findings were:

- For the presentation, tone/pitch and clarity of this resource, the average rating by expert panel members was 9 out of 10.
- All expert panel members thought this resource would be very useful to pregnant women with learning difficulties.
- All expert panel members indicated that they would use it in their own practice with pregnant women with learning difficulties.

Some comments from the Expert Panel

"This is an excellent much needed resource" Cathrine Fowler, Professor, Tresillian Chair in Child & Family Health, University of Technology Sydney, NSW

"Wonderful, we are looking forward to putting it into action" Leanne Pitcher, Clinical Coordinator of Specialist Women's Clinic, Birralee Maternity Service, Box Hill Hospital, VIC

"This is excellent. It is very friendly, reassuring and easy to read" Bryanne Barnett, Professor, Senior Perinatal & Infant Psychiatrist, Sydney South West Area Health Service, NSW

"Well done!!!! Congratulations on an excellent piece of work" Pat Brodie, Professor of Midwifery Practice Development, Sydney South West Area Health Service, University of Technology Sydney, NSW

Pilot Study - Findings

A multi-site pilot was conducted involving six sites in three states with nine antenatal care providers and 27 pregnant women with learning difficulties. Pilot data was collected, during 2006-2007, from both the pregnant women and their antenatal care providers using questionnaires and interviews.

The data collected from the pilot indicated that both the pregnant women with learning difficulties and their antenatal care providers found the *Healthy Start for Me and My Baby* book to be a unique, accessible and useful resource.

The *Healthy Start for Me and My Baby* book was described as:

- reassuring - it helped the women to understand what is 'normal' and what to expect;
- it encouraged the women to think more about and express how they were feeling;
- it helped the women to participate more in their antenatal care consultations; and
- it gave the women ideas about what they could do to care for themselves and their babies during their pregnancy and immediately after the birth.

Contributors

Bryanne Barnett, Professor, Senior Perinatal & Infant Psychiatrist, Sydney South West Area Health Service, NSW

Dianne Beveridge, Nursing Director, Women & Children's Division, Lyell McEwin Hospital, SA

Maureen Boughton, Dr, Associate Dean (Teaching & Learning), Faculty of Nursing & Midwifery, University of Sydney, NSW

Pat Brodie, Professor of Midwifery Practice Development, Sydney South West Area Health Service, and University of Technology Sydney, NSW

Anne Clarke, Midwife, Chair, Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative Birth Centre, QLD

Barbara Cook, Clinical Midwife, Redcliffe Hospital, QLD

Susan Cudlipp, Midwife, Swan District Hospital, WA

Lindy Dugard, Special Needs Midwife, Antenatal Clinic, The Canberra Hospital, ACT

Jennifer Fenwick, Associate Professor, School of Nursing & Midwifery, Curtin University of Technology, WA

Leanne Pitcher, Clinical Coordinator of Specialist Women's Clinic, Birralee Maternity Service, Box Hill Hospital, VIC

Cathrine Fowler, Professor, Tresillian Chair in Child & Family Health, University of Technology Sydney, NSW

Hilary Graham, Midwife, Liverpool Hospital, NSW

Rhonda Griffiths, Professor, Director, the South Western Sydney Centre for Applied Nursing Research, University of Western Sydney, NSW

Dawn Hay, Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing & Health Sciences, Central Queensland University, QLD

Mary Hindmarsh, Child & Family Health Nurse, Weipa Hospital, QLD

Meredith Hobbs, Clinical Midwife Manager, Lyell McEwin Hospital, SA

Rachel Mayes, Dr, Faculty of Health Sciences Postdoctoral Research Fellow,
Australian Family & Disability Studies Research Collaboration, University of Sydney,
NSW

Jenny McDermott, Nursing Unit Manager, Family Care Midwifery Team, John Hunter
Hospital, NSW

Susan McKechnie, Australian College of Midwives, SA

Susan Mitchell, Clinical Nurse Manager, Family, Child & Youth Health Service, TAS

Gwen Moody, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Westmead Hospital, NSW

Deborah Nemeth, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Karitane, NSW

Debbie Preston, Mother of four children, Woman with learning difficulties, NSW

Lisa Robertson, Clinical Midwife Specialist, Parenting Education, John Hunter
Hospital, NSW

Neil Sefton, Birth & Parent Health Coordinator, Women's & Children's Clinical
Services, Royal Hobart Hospital, TAS

Jane Svensson, Health Education Coordinator, Royal Hospital for Women, NSW

Sharon Swinton, Family Worker/Pregnancy support & transition facilitator, Uniting
Care Burnside Family Support Service, NSW

Virginia Thorley, Private practice lactation consultant, QLD

Jocelyn Toohill, FACM, Midwife Manager Antenatal & Birthing Services, Gold Coast
Hospital, QLD

Janet Wheeler, Clinical Midwifery Consultant, Liverpool Hospital, NSW

Staff at:

Australian College of Midwives

Camden Hospital Birthing Unit, NSW

John Hunter Hospital, Family Care Midwifery Team, NSW

Liverpool Hospital, Women's Services & Allied Health, NSW

Lyell McEwin Hospital, SA

Self Advocacy Sydney, NSW

NOTES

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dashed lines, typical of primary school handwriting practice paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the entire width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

NOTES

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dashed lines, typical of primary school handwriting practice paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the entire width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

