

5 TIPS TO PROMOTE HEALTHY EATING AMONG PARENTS

Researchers at Aarhus University investigate the challenges of eating healthy that parents face. They found that Danish parents perceive eating less healthy after the arrival of the child, mainly due to a **more stressful lifestyle** with child's demands. Here is a list of **5 tips** for health professionals involved in parental care, with the purpose of preventing the decrease in dietary healthiness:

1 Don't forget the parents

Some parents in the study pointed out the lack of attention on **parental health** during antenatal and postpartum care. Attention seems to be paid exclusively to the baby. Including time in the consultations and house visits to talk about **challenges for healthy eating** might be very useful for new parents.



2 Avoid "scary" messages

Especially during pregnancy, mothers revealed to be stressed by the big responsibility for their baby's health. Some mothers declared even to avoid nutrition information due to the anxiety and guilty it caused. Health professionals should adapt the content and tone of nutrition recommendation; it should be **realistic, supportive** and **non-judgmental**.

3 Listen

Perhaps the best way to give **nutrition advice** is to start by **listening to parents' needs, worries and difficulties**. This might be the best way to avoid giving unrealistic recommendations that might be counter-productive. Listening seems especially important during post-partum where some mothers experience high levels of stress.



4 Focus on food, not nutrients

Some of the parents in the study declared to be weary of nutrition discourses that are considered confusing, unrealistic and contradictory. Providing parents with practical guidance on meal planning and easy-to-make recipes might be more acceptable than more complex nutrition information.

5 Make parents aware that self-care is important

Parents of small children tend to forget their own needs. It is useful to remind them that in order to take care of a little one, they need to be well themselves. Encouraging parents to take time (perhaps the couple taking turns) to prepare a healthy meal, to practice exercise, or simply taking a long bath might make a difference to their well-being.



Contact: Andreia F. Moura: andreia@mgmt.au.dk

The study was conducted as part of the project "Edulia-Bringing down barriers to children's healthy eating", which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 764985

