I'm Healthy, I'm Pregnant, Why Am I At Risk? Key Food Safety Messages and Communication Channels for Pregnant Women

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Food Safety Education Conference, September 2006
Objectives:

- Provide broad overview the study
- Identify gaps in food safety knowledge among pregnant women
- Describe key findings that impact how USDA shares food safety information with pregnant women
Study Overview(1)

- Conducted by RTI, Spring 2000
  - Designed to better reach pregnant women with food safety messages on listeriosis
  - Publication *Listeriosis and Food Safety Tips* tested
  - 4 different locations
    - Manchester, New Hampshire
    - Cedar Rapids, Iowa
    - Salt Lake City, Utah
    - Raleigh, North Carolina
  - 8 focus groups (7-8 participants/group)
    - In each location:
      - One group high school education or less
      - One group college education
Study Overview(2)

- **Selection Criteria:**
  - At least 12 weeks pregnant
  - Primary responsibility for cooking
  - Prepare meals at least 3 times per week
  - Not vegetarians
  - Often or sometimes eat hot dogs, luncheon meats, and/or deli salads

- **Demographics**
  - Racially diverse
    - 87% Caucasian
    - 6.5% African-American
    - 6.5% Other
    - 1.6% Hispanic
  - Average age: 28
  - Average years of education: 14 years
  - Average income: $42,749
Participants’ Food Safety Knowledge

- Follow proper cleaning practices
- Somewhat knowledgeable about safe food handling practices
- Familiar with E. coli and Salmonella
- 12% (8) received food safety information from doctor
- Several read about safe food handling in prenatal magazines
- Not familiar with *Listeria*
- Not aware that pregnant women are among the at-risk
- Eat high risk foods
- Do not refrigerate leftovers immediately
- Do not use a food thermometer
- Do not USDA-recommended storage times
Participant Feedback (1)

- Change title of brochure
- Considered statistics on illness and death and words like “miscarriage” and “stillbirth” effective
- Emphasize the risk
- Develop brochure specific to each at-risk population
- More information on reheating guidelines and USDA-recommended storage times
Participant Feedback (2)

- Best way to be informed about listeriosis is through obstetricians

- Disseminate information on listeriosis through:
  - Prenatal care books, magazines, and web sites
  - Package of information given at 1st prenatal visit
Participant Feedback (3)

- Some participants:
  - Would start reheating or stop eating luncheon meats during pregnancy
  - Plan to follow recommended guidelines
  - Would be more inclined to follow recommended guidelines if doctor discussed with them
What have we done in response to this information? (1)

- Developed materials specific to pregnant women and other at-risk populations
  - Titles of publications are directed to them
    - “Protect Your Baby and Yourself from Listeriosis”
    - “Listeria and Pregnancy: What is Your Risk?”
  - Include statistics
    - “Every year, 2,500 Americans become sick from listeriosis, with 1 out of 5 dying from the illness.”
  - Use words like ‘miscarriage’ and ‘stillbirth’
    - “Listeriosis can cause miscarriage, premature delivery, serious sickness, or death of a newborn baby.”
  - Emphasize the risk
    - “Pregnant women are at high risk for getting sick from Listeria, harmful bacteria found in many foods.”
What have we done in response to this information? (2)

- Disseminated materials through:
  - American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
  - WIC Programs
  - Traditional sources
    - Food safety educators, partnering agencies/organizations, conferences
Key Messages (1)

- Pregnant women are at high risk for getting sick from *Listeria*
  - Flu-like symptoms
  - Notify health care provider

- Listeriosis can cause
  - miscarriage
  - premature delivery
  - serious sickness, or
  - death of newborn baby
Key Messages (2)

- Do not eat high risk foods
  - unpasteurized dairy products
  - unreheated deli/luncheon products
  - smoked seafood
  - salads made in the store
- Listeria can grow in the refrigerator
- Foodborne illness is preventable
  - Fight BAC®: Clean, Separate, Cook, Chill
Publications Developed Post-Study (2)

Special Handling for Ready-to-Eat, Refrigerated Foods
Reducing the Risks of Foodborne Listeria – Easy as...

Chill
Use Food As Soon As Possible
Clean

Department of Health & Human Services
Food and Drug Administration
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

USDA United States Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
Immune-Compromised Brochure Series
USDA Food Safety Resources

Got Food Safety Questions?

“Ask Karen” is available 24/7. Visit [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov). Click on “I Want To... Ask A Food Safety Question”

Call the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline: 1-888-MPHOTLINE (1-888-674-6854)