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Fat Future? Weighty issues affecting uptake of nutrition advice during pregnancy

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With increasing rates of maternal obesity, responding to the challenge of obesity prevention and promoting healthy weight gain in pregnancy has never been more important for lead maternity carers. In Aotearoa New Zealand, nutrition-programme policy targeting pregnant women has been developed. While prevention efforts are gaining some momentum, there is little sign that current approaches to promoting healthy gestational weight gain will help tackle obesity. Despite agreement that making healthy change during pregnancy is beneficial, there are complex social factors at play which shape pregnant women's food choices and eating behaviours. The differing cultural values and beliefs around eating and food choices make it challenging for lead maternity carers to provide culturally responsive nutrition advice within antenatal consultations. Factors influencing food choice are not only based upon individual preferences, but are constrained by circumstances that are social, cultural and economical. Māori, Pacific peoples and low-income groups face specific challenges when attempting dietary change and solutions need to be specifically targeted. This session will examine the literature around the factors which influence women's health beliefs and affect the uptake of nutrition advice during pregnancy. Discussion will focus on the need to review current approaches and culturally tailor programmes, not only to effect change in dietary behaviours but to reduce obesity-related inequalities in Aotearoa New Zealand over the next 25 years. How can lead maternity carers respond to policy challenges and make nutritional knowledge meaningful and accessible to women cross-cultures?

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