Gestational Diabetes Awareness within Indigenous Communities

Indigenous Diabetes Health Circle
Gestational Diabetes At A Glance

• 2% to 4% of all pregnancies in Canada (Health Canada 2001) but rates for FN women range from 8% to 18% (CDA, 2005-2009)

• Up to 70% of FN women with GDM in their first pregnancy will develop T2 diabetes later on compared to about 40% of non FN women. (Berger, Crane & Farine, 2002, pg4)
7 Generations Program

- Increase in healthy Pregnancies
- Management strategies in case of diagnosis
- Safe and Holistic Birthing
- Cultural Practices
- Decrease risk of GDM in communities
- Healthy bodies in preparation for pregnancy
- Reduce risk of Type 2 Diabetes for Mother and Baby
- Increase in Traditional Parenting
- Raise awareness about Gestational Diabetes separately from Type 1 and 2
- Promote healthy lifestyles during all stages of pregnancy and birth
- Encourage women to explore their cultural teachings and stories surrounding pregnancy and parenting
Prevention/Management Strategies & Traditional Teachings for Pregnancy
Wheel of Prevention/Management

• Need to look at the whole person and their situation, not just the diagnosis
• Individual case by case, no one is the same
Spirit

- Traditional Teachings
- Medicines and Remedies
- Aromatherapy for calmness

- Cultural Safety
- How to help to grow a spiritually strong baby
Spirit- Teachings

• Traditional Teachings
  • Cultural safety in pregnancy and birth
  • Reintroducing birthing practices/teachings
  • Midwifery/ Doulas
  • Birthing Centres
  • Holistic birthing during high risk pregnancies – How?
Spirit - Teachings

• Birth Stories
  • Bringing back oral tradition of birth

• Learning birthing practices
  • Soft spot teachings
  • Naming ceremonies
  • What to do with placenta and umbilical cord
Spirit- Medicines and Remedies

• Traditional Medicines
  • What to Take and what to avoid
  • interactions

• Other Remedies/Practices
  • Reflexology
  • Natural remedies
  • Aromatherapy
Spiritual Growth

• When a woman is pregnant she must be aware that she is responsible for not only the physical well-being of herself and her unborn baby, but also the spiritual well-being.

• There are 4 main components needed by our spirit to grow strong.

• 1. Peace/peacefulness: The woman needs a peaceful environment as well as being able to carry peace within her.

• 2. Love: She needs to be shown love while pregnant as well as be a loving person.

• 3. Kindness/Gentleness: She needs to be shown kindness or gentleness as well as be a kind and gentle person.
Spiritual Growth

• 4. Truth and safety: The woman needs to be able to hear truths and to be able to speak her truth and feel safe when she shares how she feels or her thoughts. Support is so necessary at this time in this stage of her life.

• **The science behind all of this is when we don’t have these environments and instead we have stress our body produces Cortisol which is a steroid hormone. This cortisol causes the body to release large amounts of glucose.
Mind

“Look at my body today, it will tell you my thoughts of yesterday”
-Hopi teaching

- Education
- Self Care
- Good Mind

- Stress
- Sleep
- Meditation
Mind

• Education
  • Leads to self empowerment

• Self Care
  • Keeping families informed of self care of parents, both important roles
  • Being mindful of your thoughts
  • Learning the discipline of “The Good Mind”
Mind

• Stress reduction/management
  • Healthy coping mechanisms, meditation, essential oils, etc.
  • Can’t always get rid of stress so how can we reduce/manage stress

• Sleep
  • Often overlooked
  • How to get a comfortable sleep
  • Importance of sleep as pregnancy progresses
  • A form of self care
Emotions

• Energy in motion
• Emotions are affected by the hormonal changes happening with the pregnancy
• Our mind/thoughts are what can change how we are feeling
• Awareness of how we are feeling and changing it for the better
Emotions

• Many fears and insecurities can surface

• Grief is an emotion we feel for our body and freedom of being an individual

• It’s vital for the couple to feel secure, especially Mom

• No amount of stress is good for her or her unborn baby
Emotions

• Traditionally the whole family worked to ensure that the pregnant women were taken care of.

• She is encouraged to not be in any type of stressful or traumatic situations due to the affect on her unborn child.
Emotions

• When stress happens the body produces a stress hormone called Cortisol

• This hormone is what helps people to survive, it gives us the fight or flight feeling

• We try to self soothe/medicate so then we will do what we can to self medicate/soothe. We might reach for food, cigarettes, alcohol etc., to release endorphins.
Body

- Nutrition
- Physical Activity
- Essential oils can help to relax the body

- Water
- Self-Care
Clinical Model of Management

• **Pharmacology**: Insulin
• **Glycemic Control**: managing levels through diet, exercise, numerous appointments
• **Monitoring**: Self monitoring through glucometers and tracking numbers
Nutrition

• Essential nutrients
  • Folate, Calcium, Vitamin C, D, Protein, Iron
• Community Programming
  • Group picks of seasonal fruit, kitchen sharing, meal planning
• Sustainability
  • Fresh is best; frozen next best thing, canned better than nothing
  • Teaching on sodium levels and package reading
Nutrition

• Be aware of foods served during programming
• Glucose rich foods spike levels
• Food Tracking
Physical Activity

• Low stress but still increase heart rate
• Swimming
• Walking
• Prenatal Yoga
• Other forms of activity??
Cultural Safety

• Understanding that caregiver’s culture and assumptions impact that the manner in which a clinical encounter is played out and impacts patient’s care
  • Minimize risk
  • Provide safe healing environment
Partner Involvement

- Keeping partners involved throughout pregnancy
- Using their personal comfort level in providing services
  - Personal stories, where are they at with the pregnancy?
- Often forgotten, especially during high risk pregnancies
  - They feel the stress and anxiety too!