

HEALTHY EATING

for mothers, babies & children



Using these cards

These cards are designed for health workers to use when counselling pregnant women during antenatal clinic visits and mothers of newborns during postnatal clinic visits. The cards focus on key messages concerning women's nutrition and care during pregnancy and breastfeeding and how best to look after and feed their babies. On each clinic visit, one or more cards, depending on the time available to health workers, can be used to provide effective counselling to mothers. The cover card can be used to start the counselling session and highlight the importance of all family members eating well. Community health workers and other peer educators can also use the cards to support individual and group discussions on pregnancy, breastfeeding and infant feeding.

Acknowledgements

This work is part of the Sweetpotato Action for Security and Health in Africa (SASHA) project, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The project is a five year initiative designed to improve the food security and livelihoods of poor families in Sub-Saharan Africa by exploiting the untapped potential of the sweetpotato. Developing the essential capacities, products, and methods to reposition the sweetpotato in the food economies of the region, the project will help alleviate poverty and undernutrition, particularly among poor women and children. SASHA is a project of the International Potato Center (CIP). CIP is working with PATH through the AIDS, Population and Health Integrated Assistance Program (APHIA) Western II in selected districts of Western Kenya. Together, CIP and PATH aim to improve the health status of pregnant women and the nutritional status of children up to two years of age through an integrated orange-fleshed sweetpotato and health service delivery strategy.

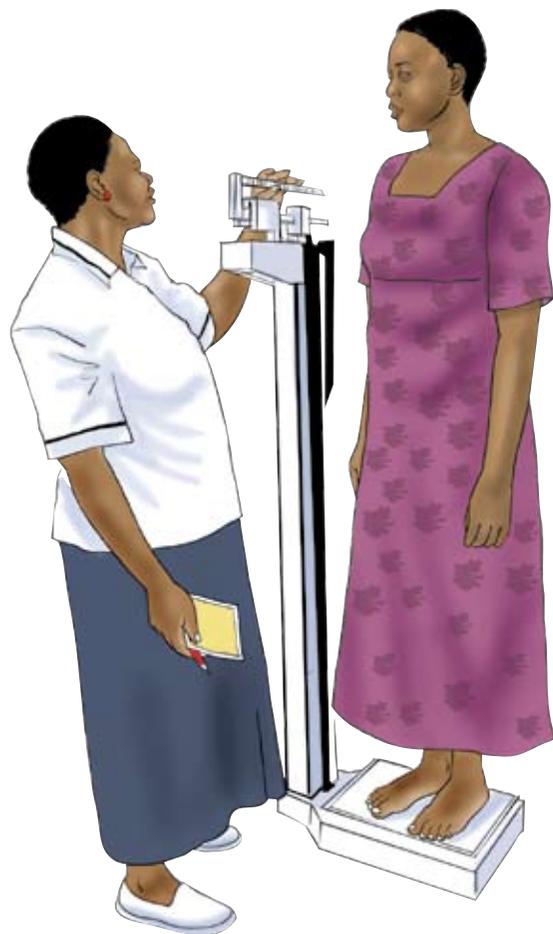
These cards were developed by Hazel Plunkett with input from Cornelia Loechl and Herman Ouedraogo of CIP, Margaret Brawley, Ellah Kedera and Rikka Trangsrud of PATH and Cornelius Kondo of Jhpiego. We thank the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation's nutritionists, health workers and Community Health Workers who gave us feedback on the material. Illustrations by Victor Ndula. Design and layout by Kung'u Kiuna.

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1. Eating well



Eating well during pregnancy and breastfeeding

- Everyone needs to eat at least three healthy meals a day as well as some snacks in between meals to meet their nutritional needs. However, pregnant and breastfeeding mothers have special needs and should eat an extra meal and snacks every day.
- You should gain on average more than one kilogram a month and approximately 12 kilograms over the course of your pregnancy.
- After the birth of your baby, you should continue eating well to improve your ability to breastfeed and to care for yourself, your baby and any other family members.
- Pregnant and breastfeeding adolescent mothers should be given more care, food and rest as they are still growing themselves.

Drinking more water during pregnancy and breastfeeding

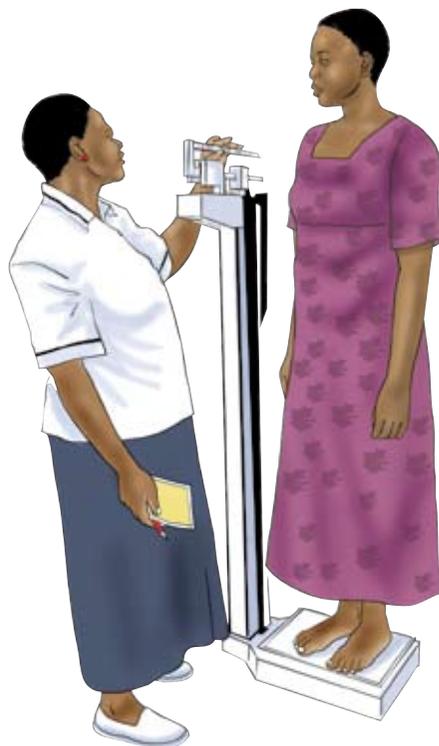
- Drink at least six 250ml cups (approximately 1.5 litres) of clean water throughout the day.
- Dehydration, a lack of water in the body, causes tiredness and over extended periods can seriously damage people's health, especially pregnant and breastfeeding women.
- Be sure your water is treated and stored in a covered container to avoid contamination.

Regular antenatal care visits

- As soon as you know you are pregnant, go to the nearest health facility for antenatal care. Your first antenatal visit should be in the fourth month of pregnancy or sooner if possible.
- Attend the antenatal clinic at least four times before the birth of your baby to learn about pregnancy, get weighed, and receive medicines, nutrients and advice on protecting your health.



- Take iron and folic acid supplements monthly and de-worming tablets once at the end of your fourth month of pregnancy to help prevent anemia. Iron and folic acid supplements and de-worming tablets are provided free-of-charge at all government health facilities.
- Sleep under a long-lasting insecticide treated mosquito net every night and take SP, an anti-malarial



medicine, every month for four months, to avoid the dangerous consequences of malaria during pregnancy. SP is provided free-of-charge at all government health facilities.

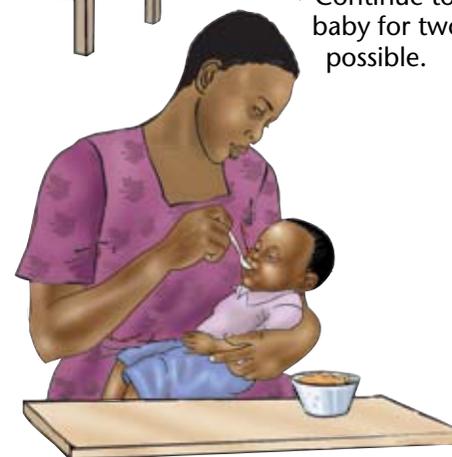
Exclusive breastfeeding

- Breast milk contains all the nutrients and water your baby needs to grow during their first six months of life.
- Colostrum, the thick yellowish milk produced by the mother in the first few days after birth, provides your baby with important nutrition and protection against illnesses.
- No other food or drink, not even water, should be added to the baby's diet until after six months of age.



Feeding infants

- At six months your baby now needs other foods in addition to breast milk.
- Orange-fleshed sweetpotato, banana, mango, pawpaw and avocado are all excellent first foods.
- Prepare food hygienically with clean hands and utensils washed with soap.
- Mash the food and feed your baby from a bowl with a spoon. Gradually increase the variety and amount of food you give your baby.
- Continue to breastfeed your baby for two years and beyond if possible.



2. Healthy foods

PROTECTIVE



BODY-BUILDING



ENERGY-GIVING



Healthy foods

Eat from the three key food groups at every meal:

- energy-giving foods
- body-building foods
- protective foods

• **Energy-giving foods** provide the body with the power to move, work and think. Maize, millet, sorghum, sweetpotatoes and cassava provide energy, which is used immediately or stored as fat on the body. Fats are also rich in energy and are needed in small amounts by our bodies. They are found in avocado, groundnuts, simsim, pumpkin seeds, margarines, vegetable oils, butter and milk.

• **Body-building foods** such as beans, groundnuts, eggs and milk as well as meat and fish support the growth and repair of the body.

• **Protective foods** contain vitamins and minerals, which strengthen the body's immune system. Mostly found in fruit and vegetables, vitamins and minerals are only needed in small amounts. They must be eaten every day and at each meal.

• Many foods contain a mixture of nutrients and belong to more than one group. Orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes provide both energy and protection from illnesses.

• Eat foods in appropriate proportions. Energy-giving foods (excluding fats) should make up about half of the food on your plate or bowl, protective foods should take up at least a quarter of your plate or bowl and body-building foods and fats together, a little under a quarter.

• Our bodies obtain high amounts of vitamins and minerals from fruit and vegetables when they are fresh and uncooked. Eat a ripe mango, ripe pawpaw or a carrot after your meal or as a snack in between meals.

• Vegetables, if they need cooking, should be covered in a small amount of safe water and boiled until they are tender.

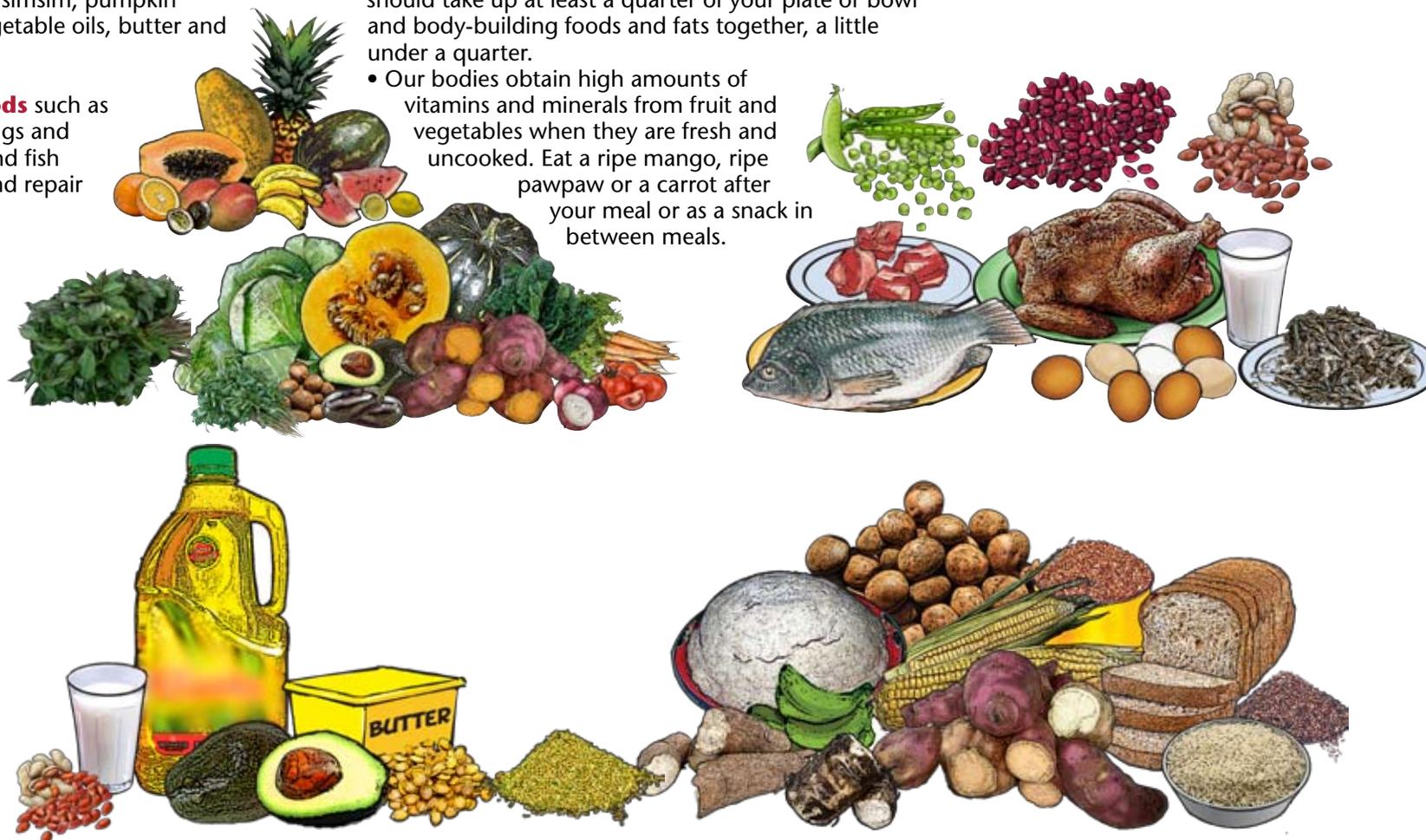
Hygienic food preparation

• Wash your hands with soap and running water before preparing food, eating or feeding children.

• Clean off fruit and vegetables before using them

• Use clean utensils to cook with

• Keep your foods in clean and covered containers in a cool and dry place



3. Vitamin A is important to everyone's health



6 Months 12 18 24 30 36

Vitamin A is essential to everybody's health

• Vitamin A is extremely important to the health of adults, children and infants as well as babies in their mothers' wombs. It helps make skin, bone and muscle, improves the body's immune system and is essential to good vision.

Vitamin A deficiencies

- People who lack vitamin A experience dryness in their eyes and eventually lose their sight. They are slower to recover from illnesses and suffer more from severe forms of illnesses, and particularly children are less able to fight infections, such as measles and pneumonia.
- Vitamin A deficiencies in pregnant and breastfeeding women prevent their babies developing properly.
- Worm infections, particularly in young children, interfere with the absorption of vitamin A and often result in a vitamin A deficiency. Pre-school children over one should be de-wormed every six months.
- Diarrhoea, malaria, measles and HIV infection also interfere with the body's ability to absorb vitamin A. People with these illnesses, especially infants and young children, should be taken to a health facility for immediate treatment.
- Increased amounts of vitamin A rich foods help with recovery from infections and achieving optimal health status.

Eating vitamin A rich foods

- Everyone in the family, but especially pregnant and breastfeeding women and young children, needs to eat vitamin A rich foods daily.
- Infants under six months can obtain all their nutrients, including vitamin A from breast milk.
- Infants over six months should be given plenty of mashed ripe mango, ripe paw-paw and boiled orange-fleshed sweetpotato.
- Mash orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes with beans (omugoye or pufuke) and eat them with some orange-fleshed sweetpotato leaves or dark green leaves for a healthy meal for adults and children over nine months old.

- Eating or mixing vitamin A rich foods with fatty foods or oils will help the body to better absorb vitamin A.
- Using oils, margarines and flours fortified with vitamin A will also help increase your intake. All fortified products carry the Ministry of Health's 'Kuboresha Afya' logo.
- Avoid tea and coffee, especially at meal times as they contain caffeine, which interferes with the absorption of nutrients such as iron.

Vitamin A rich foods	
Plant sources	Animal sources
Orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes liver and their leaves	Liver
Carrots	Milk
Pumpkin and their leaves	Butter
Ripe mangoes	Eggs
Ripe pawpaw	Omena
Dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach, amaranthus and black night shade	Fish oils



Vitamin A supplements

- In addition to eating vitamin A rich foods every day, children between six months and five years should receive a vitamin A capsule every six months from their health facility until they are five years old.
- Women who have just given birth should also take a vitamin A capsule immediately after or within eight weeks of delivery.



4. Orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes



Orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes

- One medium sized dark orange-fleshed sweetpotato will provide all the vitamin A required by a child or an adult in a day.
- Breastfeeding women need double the quantity of vitamin A required in a day.
- Orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes also provide the body with energy. The leaves are edible and also an excellent source of vitamin A.

Orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes are easy to grow

- Orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes are grown, harvested and eaten as other potatoes.
- Plant them at the beginning of the rains, so that the roots have enough moisture in the first few months to establish themselves. You can also grow them in your kitchen garden where they can be watered along with other vegetables and harvested all year round.
- Orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes look like any other sweetpotatoes, but the flesh inside is orange not white or yellow. The darker the orange flesh, the higher the amount of vitamin A the body will make. White sweetpotatoes contain no vitamin A and yellow sweetpotatoes only small amounts of vitamin A.

Orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes are easy to cook

- Cover orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes of similar sizes with water, boil them in their skins for about 20 minutes in a closed pot. Eat with their skins on or scrape out the flesh. Cooking them for too long will reduce their vitamin A content.

Orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes are good for all the family

- Babies need to start eating foods other than breast milk at six months. Orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes are an ideal first food.
- Mash boiled orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes without their skins for babies with breast milk, animal milk or fresh fruit juice. Increase the quantity and thickness as the baby gets older.
- Eat mashed orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes with beans; omugoye or pufuke and some orange-fleshed sweetpotato leaves or other dark green leaves for a

healthy meal for adults and children over nine months old.

- Make orange-fleshed sweetpotato chapattis for children and adults by mashing boiled sweetpotatoes and combining them with some wheat flour, rolling the mixture into circles and frying.
- Eating or mixing vitamin A rich foods with fatty foods or oils will help the body absorb vitamin A. Eat boiled orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes mashed with sunflower oil or followed by an avocado for a healthy snack.



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