

## **THTM #1: No cereal zone (Infant feeding 0-6 months)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Breastmilk or iron-fortified formula is all babies need before the age of six months.
- Infants' developing bodies are not ready to properly digest cereal or other foods until about six months of age.
- Giving cereal or other solid foods before an infant is developmentally ready may cause harm.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Pregnant women in their final months before delivery.
- Parents of newborns.
- Parents from cultural groups that promote early feeding of cereal and solid foods to infants.
- Parents who are sleep-deprived and may be seeking ways to encourage their child to sleep through the night.
- Anyone who asks what to feed a child in the first six months of life.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Think back to the first time your baby twisted her tiny hand around your finger. How did you feel about your baby at that moment? Sample responses:
  - Protective
  - Proud
  - Overwhelmed
  - Amazed
  - Scared
- Babies communicate with parents in amazing ways. From the first moments, babies want parents to know that they trust their parents to care for them.

#### **Dig:**

- What was the experience of your parents when they fed their own babies cereal or solid food before six months? Sample responses:
  - They fed all their children cereal at a very early age and they survived.
  - They know babies and they know that cereal helps babies sleep through the night.
- Has anyone received advice from friends or relatives on when or how to feed cereal to babies? What have they suggested? Sample responses:
  - Feed cereal early so baby sleeps through the night.

- Feeding cereal will prevent baby from crying.
- What have you *heard* about feeding solid foods - like cereal - to babies younger than six months? Sample responses:
  - Cereal helps babies sleep through the night.
  - Babies need solid food to grow.
  - Breastmilk or formula isn't enough, especially if the baby is bigger.
  - Giving solids too early isn't good for a baby (because of allergies, overeating, etc.)

**Connect:**

- Babies trust parents to do what is right for them. They say this with wrapped fingers and expectant eyes.
- How can parents know what to feed their babies when faced with conflicting information? How do you decide what to do when grandparents promote early feeding of cereal while others assure you that breastmilk and/or iron-fortified formula are all your baby needs for the first six months?
- How would you feel if you could do something today that could help prevent some things that children struggle with as they get older (like allergies or overweight?)
- How would you feel if you decided to follow current medical advice and chartered your own course that may be different from your family or friends?

**Act:**

- How can you show respect and love to caring relatives and grandparents, yet protect your child from being fed cereal before their body is ready for it?
- What will you do to protect your child from being given cereal before their body is developmentally ready for it?

## **THTM #2: The airplane (Infant feeding 6 months)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Introduce cereal to baby at six months.
- Offer cereal with a spoon, not in a bottle.
- Serve cereal first, before offering other foods like fruits and vegetables.
- Mix cereal with breastmilk or iron-fortified formula.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Parents of infants less than six months old.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Every baby needs to feel loved. Parents taking care of their baby's needs are helping baby feel loved. What are ways your baby lets you know what he needs or wants?
- Can you imagine having the same food over and over and suddenly experiencing a new flavor and texture?
- Can you imagine your excitement when you offer cereal to your baby for the first time?
- How can allowing babies experiment with new tastes and food be a way of showing love?
- How can allowing babies to experiment with new tastes and food be a way of showing love?

#### **Dig:**

- How do babies tell parents they are ready for more than breastmilk or iron-fortified cereal? Sample responses:
  - Baby will be fussy when parents are eating. He is letting you know he wants in on the fun.
  - Baby may reach for your food or show his interest in what you are eating.
  - Baby can hold his head in a steady, upright position.
  - Baby can sit with support.
  - Baby is waking up in the night between feedings after several months of sleeping through the night.
- Feeding babies can be very messy. What important lessons are babies learning through this messy experience? What happens if a baby gets cereal in the bottle and doesn't get to experience the messiness?
- What have you heard about introducing solid foods to babies?
- What are signs that your baby gives you that they are full? Sample responses:

- Baby may refuse food.
- Baby may turn her head away from the spoon or knock the spoon away.
- Baby may lose interest in food and start playing.

**Connect:**

- We all know the tricks to get children to eat more food. Some things, like pretending the spoon is an airplane, add fun to mealtime. But do parents really need to encourage babies to eat? Is giving your baby a lot of food a way of showing love? Key concepts to affirm with parents:
  - Babies don't need encouragement to eat. They are born with the ability to monitor their fullness and will let parents know when they are done. The parents' job is to read their babies' signals and stop feeding when baby is full.
  - Babies who associate large amounts of food with love may grow into overweight children and adults.
- Babies trust parents. What is your baby learning about trust when you allow her to decide how much she wants to eat? Sample responses:
  - Babies learn to trust parents to respect their feelings of fullness.
  - Babies trust parents and soon they begin to trust themselves.
  - Just as babies trust caregivers to know what foods to offer, parents need to trust babies to know how much their babies want to eat.
- How will you feel when you know you did right by your baby by respecting their signs of fullness?
- What lessons about love are parents teaching their infants when they allow children to eat just until they decide they are full?

**Act:**

- Have you noticed any signs that your baby is ready for solid food yet?
- What will you offer first?
- What are your plans to celebrate this exciting moment in your child's life? (Don't forget to capture the moment on camera!)

## **THTM #3: Teaching colors (Infant feeding 6-8 months)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Introduce fruits and vegetables to baby a few weeks after baby adjusts to cereal.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Parents of babies less than six months old.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

Advance preparation: Gather sample paint chip cards from a paint/hardware store. Select a rainbow of colors, or cut multi-colored construction paper into 3 X 5 inch cards.

Ask parents to:

- Pick a color that says something about how you feel about eating vegetables. (Allow less than a minute for their selection. You want them to feel rushed so they project their feelings into the color and they don't have time to rationalize their responses.)
- Next, pick a color that says something about how you feel about eating fruit? (Share responses.)
- How do you want *your child* to feel about eating fruits and vegetables?

#### **Dig:**

- What successes have you had getting your other child to try vegetables? (Skip this question if parent has no other children.)
- What can parents do to make babies—and children—love vegetables and fruit?
- How can your child have even healthier eating habits than you? Sample responses:
  - Offer fruits and vegetables often
  - Eat them often so your child sees that you enjoy them
  - Experiment until you find veggies and fruits that you do like or fun ways of eating them
  - Don't stop serving them if your child appears to dislike them. (Babies who spit out food may just be playful, not expressing preference. It often takes 10-15 exposures for a child to accept a new food.)

#### **Connect:**

- How would *your life and health* be better if you loved fruits and vegetables? How would you feel about yourself? Sample responses:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Feel more in control
- Feel proud that you are taking care of your body
- Feel confident that you are providing a good example for your children
- Feel you are doing the best you can to protect future health
- Enjoy smooth skin, shiny hair and a slim body
- How will *your child's* life be better if they learn to love fruits and vegetables now?
- How will you feel if your child learns to love fruits and vegetables?

**Act:**

- What fruit or vegetable will you try this week?
- What fruit or vegetable do you plan to offer first?
- What are you excited for your baby to eat?

## **THTM #4: Smiley face (Infant feeding 8-12 months)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Introduce chicken, turkey, fish, beef, beans and yogurt around 8-12 months.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Parents of eight-to-twelve month old infants.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Imagine you could sit down and have an in depth conversation with your baby.
- What do you think your baby would say about food?
- How do you want your baby to *feel* about food?

#### **Dig:**

- At 8-12 months, babies are ready to join the family fun at the dinner table. What happens when you combine feeding time with family time?
- What are babies doing when they touch, squeeze, drop and push foods around their tray?
- How do you know when they have had enough?
- What can parents do to help their child love the feeding adventure?
- What kinds of table foods do you think you'll give to your baby?
- How do you feel about your baby's diet expanding to include more types of foods?
- If you have older children, tell me how it felt when you brought them to the dinner table for the first time. What was it like introducing family favorites to an older infant?

#### **Connect:**

- What memories of family meals do you have?
- What memories do you want your child to have?
- A life-long joy of eating starts in infancy. What can parents do in addition to serving healthy food to help their child learn a healthy love of food?
- How will it feel to be able to offer your baby the same foods that the rest of your family eats?

#### **Act:**

- What new foods do you think you'll introduce to your baby next week?
- What will you do to help your child develop a healthy, life-long joy of eating?

## **THTM #5: Babies blossom (Infant development)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Parents have great power to help babies blossom and be the best they can be.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Pregnant women.
- Parents and caregivers of babies from birth to a year.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Think back to your childhood. We all remember people who had a great impact on our lives when we were younger. Who was influential to you when you were growing up?
- How did they impact your life?

#### **Dig:**

- Your baby trusts you to create a lifetime foundation of love. What do you do everyday that lets your baby know you love her and that she can trust you?
- How is your love helping your baby blossom?

#### **Connect:**

- (Give parents the handout and ask them to read the top ten list.) Which of these actions *protects* your baby?
- Which of these actions *enriches* your baby's life?
- How will what you feed your baby today make a difference to her tomorrow?
- Someday your baby will tell others how you protected and enriched her life. What do you want her to say about you?

#### **Act:**

- What food-related actions will you do this week to protect and enrich your baby's life?
- What other actions will you try this week to give your baby a great start in life?

## **THTM #6: Graduate smart (Breastfeeding)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Breastmilk is the best food for infants.
- Breastfeeding a full year yields the most benefits to babies and mothers.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Pregnant women.
- Breastfeeding mothers who may be thinking about quitting.
- Mothers returning to work or school who may need support to keep breastfeeding.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Most people think of breastfeeding as a personal decision, one the mother makes with her family. How have others reacted to your decision to breastfeed your baby?
- What have you heard from other mothers, especially about breastfeeding for a full year?

#### **Dig:**

- People have varied reactions to breastfeeding. Fortunately, every mother gets to decide for herself how long to breastfeed her baby.
- What will you consider as you decide how long to breastfeed your baby?
- What kind of support—or lack of support—have you received from others?
- What are the hurdles you face in breastfeeding your baby? What do you like about it?
- What keeps you going, keeps you breastfeeding?

#### **Connect:**

- How will breastfeeding impact your baby's future?
- What connection do you think there is between breastfeeding and your child's future success?
- Breastfeeding mothers are sometimes surprised that they receive physical and emotional benefits, along with their babies. What *emotion-based* benefits do breastfeeding mothers receive? Sample responses:
  - Feel bonded to my baby in a powerful way.
  - Enjoy snuggle time and precious moments with my baby.
  - Feel confident that I am offering my best to my baby.
  - Fulfilling dreams and promises I made to my baby that I would give her my best.

- What *physical* benefits do breastfeeding mothers receive? Sample responses:
  - A flatter post-pregnancy stomach.
  - Ability to snack without gaining weight or while losing weight.
  - Admiration among people who wish they could breastfeed longer.
- How will you feel when you achieve your breastfeeding goal? How would you feel if you breastfed for your baby's first year?

**Act:**

- As your baby blows out that one single candle on her first birthday cake, you will celebrate her birth and all the miraculous events of her first year. Privately, you may also be celebrating the benefits of “going the distance” and breastfeeding for a full year.
- Does anyone want to share their breastfeeding dreams with the group?
- What can you do to make sure your breastfeeding plans and dreams happen as expected?

## **THTM #7: Other uses for bottles (Weaning)**

### **What is the key message?**

- After a year, it's time to wean toddlers from the bottle to the cup.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Mothers with infants nine months or older.
- Mothers in the process of weaning infants from bottle feeding.
- Mothers of children still using a bottle past the age of one.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Imagine that you always ate your favorite comfort food with the people you loved most. Would that make that comfort food even more important?
- What is your favorite comfort food? What is it about that food that conveys comfort to you?

#### **Dig:**

- What makes the bottle especially comforting to babies? Sample responses:
  - It contains their favorite food, one they have enjoyed from their very beginning.
  - The people they love most on the earth hold them—and the bottle—while they eat.
  - The baby bottle is the ultimate comfort food and container for babies.
- How can the bottle also be a comfort for parents? Sample responses:
  - Offering a bottle allows them to hold on and enjoy their child's baby stage.
  - It provides a quick and easy way to quiet a noisy child.
  - Giving a child the bottle is less messy than offering milk in a cup.
- Why should parents encourage children to give up the bottle when it sometimes represents comfort and love to babies? Sample responses:
  - Young children should learn to find comfort and love from items other than food and bottles.
  - A child's teeth could be damaged by providing milk in the bottle.

#### **Connect:**

- What can happen to a child if the bottle is continued after they turn one? Sample responses:
  - Excess weight.
  - Delay in developing feeding skills.
  - Baby bottle tooth decay.

- Have you ever heard of baby bottle tooth decay? How do you think parents of children with baby bottle tooth decay feel? (Encourage them to read “Lynn’s Story” on the back of the handout. Summarize it for the group, if reading it isn’t practical.)
- How will you feel when you successfully wean your child from the bottle?

**Act:**

- What actions will you take this week to protect your child from baby bottle tooth decay?
- What will you offer to your child as she gives up the comforts of the bottle?

Sample responses:

- A routine to replace bottle time like a warm bath and a good book
- Allow your child to choose a special cup that is hers alone.
- A soft, cuddly blanket.
- Water in a fun-shaped glass.
- Ice cubes in the glass.
- Cups with pictures of child and mom on the outside.

## **THTM #8: Ultrasound (Mother affirmation)**

### **What is the key message?**

- There are many ways to be a great mom.
- Recognize and celebrate what you are doing right.
- Know that you make a difference in your child's life every day.
- Your actions are powerful and important.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Any parent.
- Parents lacking confidence in their abilities.
- Parents facing considerable challenges or lacking a support system.
- Parents without positive parenting role models.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Ask: What makes someone a great mom? That's an age-old question that every mother struggles with.

#### *Idea for a group:*

- A researcher recently did over 1,000 interviews to find out what moms thought about what makes a great mom. But before I reveal their "top ten list", let's make our own top ten list of what makes a great mom. (Record responses on a flip chart, board or paper.)
- Reveal the Top 10 Characteristics of "Great Moms" gathered from the interviews:
  1. No matter what else is going on in her life, family comes first.
  2. A great mom has achieved the right balance in her work time, family time and time to herself.
  3. Puts her own needs on hold for her children.
  4. Keeps a close eye on her kids' friends.
  5. Puts limits on time her kids can spend with video games and/or the Internet.
  6. Her kids are her whole world.
  7. Family eats dinner together every night.
  8. Teaches her kids as early as possible to be independent.
  9. Puts limits on time kids can watch TV.
  10. Arranges her schedule around her children's school events
- Ask: How does this compare with our top ten list? Which responses do you agree with? Disagree?

**Dig:**

- How do you feel about your successes as a mom so far?
- What challenges have you overcome?
- What makes you feel like a great mom? Can you tell me about a recent experience when you really felt proud of yourself as a parent?

**Connect:**

- Without exception, every parent strives to love and protect their child.
- People are rewarded with raises at work and grades at school. Who recognizes and rewards parents? How are they recognized?
- How can being recognized as a great mother encourage you to keep going when times are tough? What can you do to give yourself praise?

**Act:**

- Recognition is something we all need. Take time to feel good about everything you are doing as a great parent for your child.
- What will you do this week to reward yourself for a job well done?

## **THTM #9: Baby legs (Postpartum weight loss)**

### **What is the key message?**

- It is possible to return to pre-pregnancy weight.
- Lose the extra baby fat before becoming pregnant again.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Any pregnant and postpartum women.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- If there is one thing that you could do for yourself after your baby is born, what would it be?
- How do you feel about your weight right now?
- What have you heard about weight loss after having a baby?

#### *Idea for a group:*

Advance preparation option: Clip photos of celebrity mothers just after birth from magazines and newspapers.

- You have all seen the photos. Celebrity moms, holding their babies just a few months after birth, already back to their pre-pregnancy weight. Flat stomachs. Smiling and in control. Revealing dresses showing tight skin and muscles. Perhaps they are even in bikinis, playing in the sand with baby. (Option: Pass photos of post-pregnancy celebrity mothers around before discussion.)
- What makes celebrity moms so successful at losing their pregnancy weight so quickly? (Sample responses: personal chefs, five hour workouts with personal trainers.)

#### **Dig:**

- Do mothers who are successful at losing weight—*know* more about weight loss than others?
- Do mothers who are successful at losing weight—*feel* differently about weight loss than others?
- What does it take to lose weight after pregnancy?
- Is it realistic to think weight will drop off as quickly as it seems to for celebrity moms? (Do you think it is realistic to think that you can lose the weight you gained during pregnancy without time and effort? With time and effort?)
- What are *real* barriers to losing weight after pregnancy? Sample responses:
  - Belief (or hope) that weight loss isn't realistic or possible after having a baby.

- Accepting extra baby fat as part of motherhood.
- Perception that being a good mother means being focused only on the baby.
- Perception that focusing on your weight is selfish or unimportant.
- Belief (or hope) that weight will drop off magically during the first year.
- Planning to have another baby soon so not recognizing weight loss as important or practical until after the next baby.
- Belief that breastfeeding mothers shouldn't be active or eat low-calorie foods.
- Accustomed to eating more during pregnancy and unwilling or unable to cut back.
- Eating for comfort. Parenting a new baby can be stressful and some parents reach for foods to get them through tough times.
- Eating out of loneliness. Some moms miss the stimulation of work and friends and find food a convenient substitute that feeds their loneliness.
- Eating because of tiredness and the belief that it will provide energy.
- Some traditional cultural foods for postpartum women are high in fat and calories.

**Connect:**

- How does making yourself feel better help your baby?
- How would it help to pay more attention to yourself if you became pregnant again?
- How would your pregnancy been different if you had taken more time for yourself?
- How does the amount of weight you gained during your pregnancy affect how you feel now?
- How would you feel if you could achieve your weight goal?

**Act:**

- What actions can you take this week to help you achieve your weight goal?
- Sample responses:
- Walk with your baby in a stroller or front pack. Talk about the trees, birds and clouds. Tell your baby about the dreams you have for her life. Share your feelings about baby being a part of your life.
  - Buy and use an inexpensive exercise video/DVD with music or borrow them from your local library. Let your baby watch as you dance - pick him up and gently sway to the music.
  - Breastfeed! It's every mother's secret weight loss tool.
  - Eat just until full. Your miraculous body will still produce all the breastmilk needed. Don't let breastfeeding become an excuse for donuts or chips.
  - Feeling too tired to exercise? A brisk walk in the fresh air may revitalize you.
  - Feeling lonely? Find another new mother and walk with your child into a new friendship. Or call your local hospital and join a new mothers group.

- Be realistic. Aim for a slow, steady weight gain when pregnant so the weight comes off easier later.
- Drink more water; it makes you feel full.
- Be patient. Weight gained over nine months may take that long to disappear.

## **THTM #10: Watch for signs (Postpartum depression)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Being a mother is a hard job.
- You are not alone.
- Postpartum depression is common (1 in 10 women are depressed after giving birth) and can hurt you and your family.
- Depression is treatable. Help is available. Ask for it.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Pregnant women.
- Any woman with a history of depression or anxiety.
- Postpartum women.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Give mothers the handout and ask them to take the quiz on back. Watch their body language as they take the quiz to identify which women might be struggling with depression. Have tissues handy. (Don't ask women to reveal their quiz results. The quiz is for them alone.)

#### **Dig:**

- Have you heard this saying: "Talk about your joy but keep your pain to yourself"? What kind of pain might a pregnant or new mother be feeling?

Sample responses:

- |                                    |                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Overwhelmed  | <input type="radio"/> Isolated  |
| <input type="radio"/> Guilty       | <input type="radio"/> Exhausted |
| <input type="radio"/> Sad          | <input type="radio"/> Tearful   |
| <input type="radio"/> Frustrated   | <input type="radio"/> Irritable |
| <input type="radio"/> Lethargic    | <input type="radio"/> Sleepless |
| <input type="radio"/> Flat         | <input type="radio"/> Impatient |
| <input type="radio"/> Ashamed      | <input type="radio"/> Hopeless  |
| <input type="radio"/> Tired        | <input type="radio"/> Alone     |
| <input type="radio"/> Disappointed | <input type="radio"/> Flawed    |

- What might prevent a pregnant or new mother from getting the help she needs to get through a difficult time? Sample responses:
  - Shame of being depressed during "joyful times."
  - Fear of what others will say about her.
  - Stigma about seeking help for depression.

- Fear of others judging her.
  - Unaware that depression is common, and feeling alone.
  - Unaware that help is available.
  - Feeling so physically and emotionally debilitated that she can't make the first move to get help.
- A lot of women feel sad or depressed after they give birth. What are some of the thoughts that you've been having? Is this hard for you to talk about?

**Connect:**

- Depression is a very common experience during and after pregnancy.
- What is the difference between “baby blues” and depression? Sample responses:
  - Mothers experiencing “baby blues” may have mood swings, sadness, crying spells, loss of appetite, sleeping problems and feel irritable but these feelings will go away within a few days to a week.
  - The difference between postpartum depression and the “baby blues” is that postpartum depression often affects a woman's well-being and keeps her from taking care of herself and her baby for a longer period of time.
- Think about the checklist you just completed. If you answered “yes” to three or more of those questions, you may be experiencing depression. It is important for you to know that depression is serious, you are not alone and there is help.
- Being depressed does not mean you are a bad mom, only that you need help.

**Act:**

- What can moms who are experiencing “baby blues” do to get through this time? Sample responses:
  - Take naps.
  - Leave housework for another time.
  - Ask friends and family for help.
  - Talk to other moms.
  - Stop putting pressure on yourself to do everything.
  - Get help with household chores.
  - Go for walks.
  - Get out of the house.
  - Spend time having fun with your partner or friends.
- What can moms who are experiencing depression do? Sample responses:
  - The first step is to tell someone about how you are feeling. You and your baby don't have to suffer.
  - Depression needs to be treated by a doctor.
  - Medications and talking to others are things that can help.
- The first step to stopping depression is to tell someone, and that someone can be me. I have contact information for people that can help you.

## **THTM #11: Vegetable baby face (Introducing vegetables)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Getting children to develop a love of vegetables takes time.
- Successful parents keep trying.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Any parents, especially parents whose children don't like vegetables.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Tell me about some successes you've had in your life. Has there been a time when you weren't successful at first, but you did eventually succeed?
- Tell me about a success you've had with your child that you never thought you could achieve. How hard was it at the beginning? How did it feel to be successful?

#### *Idea for a group:*

- I'd like to start with a story about failure and success. There was a famous swimmer named Florence Chadwick. She accepted the challenge to swim 26 miles from Catalina Island to Palos Verdes, California. The waters were frigid and sharks trailed her most of the way but Chadwick kept swimming. After 15 hours of rough swimming, a heavy fog set in and she couldn't see her goal—the coastline—and she gave up. She climbed aboard an escort boat only to find out that she was less than half a mile from shore. When asked why she stopped, Chadwick said: "It was the fog. If I could have seen land, I would have finished. But when you can't see your goal, you lose all sense of progress and you begin to give up." A few months later, she set a record swimming in the same waters.
- How does this story related to parents trying to get their child to like vegetables?  
Sample responses:
  - Parents may stop giving vegetables to their child just before she starts to like them.
  - Parents may not know that they are close to success.
  - Parents may think children don't like vegetables because they don't eat them the first time they are offered instead of trying 12-15 times.

#### **Dig:**

- What would make you feel successful about feeding your child fruits and vegetables?

- What are some of the barriers that keep you from reaching your goal of having your children love vegetables?

**Connect:**

- What are important lessons that parents teach toddlers and young children that require continued attention and reinforcement over time? Sample responses:
  - Teaching them to say “please” and “thank you.”
  - Teaching them to keep their fingers out of electrical circuits.
  - Teaching them not to hit.
- Do you give up when the child doesn’t understand the lesson the first time?
- What do you do to keep focused on your goals when you don’t achieve them right away?
- When your child understands the lesson, how do you feel about yourself as a parent?
- How is getting your child to love vegetables an important life lesson?
- How will you feel when your child loves vegetables?

**Act:**

- What is one idea you have to get your child to eat more fruits and vegetables this week?
- What will you say to yourself if your child chooses not to eat his vegetables this week?
- What positive words could you say to yourself to encourage yourself to keep trying?

## **THTM #12: Pregnant belly (Prenatal weight gain)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Postpartum weight is affected by what and how much you eat while pregnant.
- Putting on weight during pregnancy is a good thing. Putting on *too much* weight during pregnancy makes returning to your normal weight more challenging.
- It is possible and realistic to expect to return to your pre pregnancy weight.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Pregnant women.
- Women planning to become pregnant.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- How do you feel about the way your body has been changing? What are the biggest surprises?
- How do you think you'll feel about your body after your baby is born?

#### *Idea for a group:*

- (Ask participants to close their eyes, if they feel comfortable, while you read them this guided imagery activity. Read it slowly so they can visualize your words.)

Your newborn baby is three months old. The baby is starting to sleep through the night. You're settling into a comfortable routine. And you are getting ready to go to a doctor's visit.

You put on your jeans, zipping them up effortlessly. You tuck in your shirt and slip a belt through the belt hoops. As you enter your doctor's office, you catch the glance of others in the waiting room as you walk into your doctor's office. The nurse weighs you. A smile comes across your face as you read the numbers on the scale.

You meet a friend for coffee after your doctor visit. She asks you to do a "body twirl" as you arrive because she simply can't believe you look so great. She asks for your secret to a great body after pregnancy. You smile and say....

(Ask participants to open their eyes if they closed them during the guided imagery activity.)

**Dig:**

- How would you feel if someone told you that you looked fabulous just months after having your baby?
- How would you feel if you weighed in at your pre-pregnancy weight—just a few months after birth?
- What might prevent you from experiencing those feelings of success?
- Which is a greater barrier to your weight loss success: belief that you can't ever achieve your normal weight again *or* lack of ability to do so?
- What could change your belief about the reality of achieving your pre-pregnancy weight?

**Connect:**

- How would your life be different if you were able to lose your pregnancy weight?
- What would you be able to do at your normal weight that you couldn't do if you didn't lose your "baby weight?"
- How would your child's life be different if you were able to lose your pregnancy weight?

**Act:**

- Pregnancy is a time of waiting, hoping and dreaming. But what can you do today—and in the months ahead—to make your dream of going back to your normal weight come true?
- What foods will help you gain the right amount of weight?
- What activities will help you gain just the right amount of weight?

## **THTM #13: Supermom (Breastfeeding)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Breastfeeding is a powerful gift that only mothers can give.
- Mothers who breastfeed are helping their child be all that they can be.
- Women who are confident about breastfeeding have more breastfeeding success.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Pregnant women.
- Women who believe myths that they won't be successful breastfeeding mothers.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- What do you think are some things you can do to give your baby the best start in life?
- What are your feelings about breastfeeding?

#### *Idea for a group:*

Assemble Post-it™ notes and pens before the group. Give a small Post-it™ note pad and pen to each person as they arrive.)

- Breastfeeding is a very personal decision, influenced by feelings and concerns. Let's start with your feelings about breastfeeding. Please write down some of your *feelings* about breastfeeding on the Post-it™ notes. No names please. Just write down one or more feeling word(s) you have about breastfeeding on single Post-it™ note. (Allow time for participants to reflect and write responses on Post-it™ notes.)
- Next, please write down one or two concerns you have about breastfeeding. As before, please write each concern separately on each Post-it note. (Group the Post-it notes on a poster board or wall, separating Post-it™ notes containing positive feelings from those with negative feelings and/or concerns.)

#### **Dig:**

- Let's start with concerns you have about breastfeeding. (If using the group idea, read concerns noted on Post-it™ notes.) Sample concerns:
  - I won't be able to create enough milk for my baby.
  - My milk won't be "rich" enough.
  - I won't be able to breastfeed because my mother didn't.
  - I can't make breastfeeding work with my busy life.
  - Breastfeeding will tie me down.

- My breasts will sag.
- Breastfeeding will force me to do everything and I need support from relatives.
- Why do you feel that way?
- Lots of mothers share these concerns. How do you think mothers that are successful at breastfeeding overcome these concerns? (If in the group, allow mother with previous breastfeeding experience provide insights related to each myth. If no experienced mothers are in the group address each myth directly, asking mothers to share stories and experiences they have heard.)

**Connect:**

- We have talked about the concerns and negative feelings you may have about breastfeeding. What are some of the positive feelings or thoughts you have about breastfeeding? (If no positive words are suggested in your group, use these or other positive feeling words that mothers often associate with breastfeeding.)

Sample responses:

- bond
- love
- miracle
- peace
- nurturing
- gift
- relaxing
- What is more important to mothers considering breastfeeding: the positive feelings of bonding with their miracle or possible concerns about breastfeeding?
- What hopes and dreams for you and your baby will be fulfilled when you breastfeed your baby?
- How will your life be better if you breastfeed your baby?
- How will your baby's life be better if you breastfeed?

**Act:**

- Which feelings are driving your breastfeeding decision?
- How will you respond to these feelings?

## **THTM #14: A new me (Teenage pregnancy/breastfeeding)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Motherhood changes everything. Bonding with your baby changes you in a powerful way that inspires you to be the best you can be.
- Breastfeeding may seem impossible until you gaze at your baby's eyes for the first time.
- Give breastfeeding a try.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Pregnant teenagers.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- We all learn something new about ourselves almost everyday. What have you learned about yourself in the past months that has caught you by surprise? Delighted you? Made you proud of yourself?
- In what ways are you stronger than you thought?
- How do you feel about the way you have changed?

#### **Dig:**

- What things about motherhood worry you?
- What things do you feel confident about?
- What have been your thoughts about feeding your new baby?

#### **Connect:**

- A few months ago, growing a baby may have seemed so overwhelming that you didn't think it possible. But with challenges come surprising strength.
- Some people feel breastfeeding is a gift a mother gives her baby. But mothers who breastfeed feel that the baby gives *them* the gift. What do you feel?
- How might breastfeeding change you and your baby? (Affirm all feelings.)
- How might your life be better if you breastfeed your baby?
- How might your baby's life be better if you breastfeed?

#### **Act:**

- Are you willing to try breastfeeding as a way to bond with your miracle?
- What will you have to do now to be ready for breastfeeding when your baby arrives?
- What people will you need to tell?
- Who will support you and your decision?

- What will you say to influence others to support you in your breastfeeding decision?

## **THTM #15: College diploma (Smoking)**

### **What is the key message?**

- The real costs of smoking go beyond the price of cigarettes.
- Children often pay the real cost of parental smoking.
- Focusing on the future may help moms change their smoking habits today.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Any woman who smokes.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

(Prior to the session, develop a set of “feeling word cards” and have them available for use at the session. Feeling word cards are 3X5 index cards with one feeling noted on each card. Directions on making feeling cards are included at the end of this session. )

- Please choose one or two “feeling cards” that reflect how you feel about smoking. Ask parents to share feelings they identified with smoking.
- After sharing, ask: what makes you feel that way about smoking?

#### **Dig:**

- What benefits do you get from smoking?
- What can you replace smoking with to provide those same benefits?
- How would your life be better if you stopped smoking?
- What makes it difficult for you to stop smoking?

#### **Connect:**

- How would you feel about yourself if you were able to stop smoking?
- How would your child’s life be better if you stopped smoking?
- How would your children feel if you stopped smoking?

#### **Act:**

(Display the feeling word cards again on a table or board.)

- Select a feeling word card that says how you want to feel one month from today about smoking.
- What will you do this week so you can experience those positive feelings one month from today?
- What will you do during this challenging time to make you feel less fearful, tense, and overwhelmed?

**How to create a set of feeling word cards:** Write each of the following feeling words on an individual 3 X 5 index card: Excited, joyful, peaceful, curious, happy, glad, pleased, confident, loving, warm, tender, proud, safe, secure, open, amazed, passionate, surprised, calm, sad, depressed, hopeless, scared, afraid, worried, impatient, numb, hurt, lonely, shocked, embarrassed, ashamed, exhausted, confused, fragile, envious, edgy, hate, lost, repulsed, uncomfortable, hopeful, alive, inspired, thrilled, trusting.

## **THTM #16: Set the table (Family meals)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Family meals provide emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual nourishment.
- Family meals connect families in a powerful way.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Any parent.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Parents face challenges today that didn't exist or weren't common when your parents were raising you. What are some of the challenges you face raising children, challenges that exist because we live in changing, turbulent times?  
Sample responses:
  - Unsafe communities
  - Internet predators
  - Gang activity
  - Violence on TV
  - War and nuclear threats
  - Parents working multiple jobs with little quality time with children
  - Threats of attacks, even in schools
  - Street crime
  - Uncertain times
- Suppose I could take out a prescription pad and write a prescription for something that would help protect your child from the scary times in which we live. Would you be interested?
- (Offer handout) The prescription I would write would be this: Eat meals together as a family. Family meals have enormous power. They can be the family lifeline during turbulent times. Eating together gives you and your children a sense of belonging, a connection that allows them to be strong when challenged.

#### *Idea for a group:*

- Have any of you played “Fly-on-the-Wall” before? It's a fun game. Ready to play? Imagine I was a “Fly-on-the-Wall” during your most recent mealtime with your family. A fly-on-the-wall has a way of getting around and seeing things you might not see when you're involved in a certain situation. What would I see or hear during mealtimes at your home?

#### **Dig:**

- How can busy parents find time to sit down and eat together with their families?

- What makes it difficult for your family to eat together?
- What can parents say and do at meals that give everyone—even babies—a chance to connect?
- Family meals can be pressure cookers or oases of peace in a busy day. What can parents do to make them peaceful, fun experiences for all?

**Connect:**

- What memories of your family meals do you hope your children will cherish?
- Are there rituals or traditions that you could start today that might be something they will share with *their* children?
- What are some things that children can learn from family meals?
- How do you feel, as a parent, after connecting with your child in a powerful way?

**Act:**

- Without a lot of additional effort or time, simply eating together as a family could actually change the direction of your child's and family's life.
- What's for dinner at your house this week—and who will be enjoying it with you?
- What are some things you can do this week to make eating together possible?
- What can you do to adapt your schedules to make family meals more frequent?

## **THTM #17: Ten tasteful gifts (Superfoods)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Offering “power” foods like beans, vegetables and whole grain bread is like giving gifts to your children.
- When offered consistently, children will develop a life-long love for these superfoods..

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Any parent.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- In our commercial world, we often think of gifts as things we buy and wrap. What other kinds of gifts can you think of that parents give their children?
- What are some of the things you do for your children that you consider a gift?

#### *Idea for a group:*

- Imagine you are on your way home after a busy day. You stop to pick up your mail. Among the many envelopes is a letter addressed to you. You step inside your house, sit down and open the envelope. Out falls a thank-you note from your child. This note isn't for a birthday toy but rather for the gifts you have given her. You sit down and read the letter over and over. Tears start to flow as you read the “gifts” for which she is thankful. You are amazed that none of the “gifts” you have given her are “things”. Instead the “gifts” your child is thanking you for are....
  - What “gifts” would you hope your child would include in her thank-you note to you? Sample responses: Gift of:
    - Feeling special
    - Feeling someone cares
    - Feeling loved
    - Feeling secure
    - Feeling good about oneself
    - Feeling like you matter

#### **Dig:**

- (Offer participants the handout and ask them to read the list of gifts that will last a lifetime.) How can offering healthy foods to your children be considered a gift? Sample responses:

- Learning to love healthy foods may keep children from gaining excess weight. That means they can keep up with their friends and have normal-sized clothes that are easy to find in regular stores, play sports, etc.
- Child will know parents care enough to make sure they get the very best in life.
- Child may feel special because their parents honor them with healthy foods.
- Child may feel proud that they enjoy good foods, not just junk foods.
- Child is more likely to live a longer, happier and healthier life.
- Child is less likely to struggle with weight throughout life because they already enjoy the foods that prevent weight gain.
- Child is less likely to get diabetes or other disease that overweight children have a greater chance of developing.

**Connect:**

- Planning, preparing and serving foods like beans, oranges, whole wheat bread and yogurt takes time—much like wrapping a valuable gift in pretty paper and bows takes time.
- When you give your child these daily “gifts”, how does that make you feel as a mother?
- How do you feel when you prepare a healthy recipe that is a huge hit with your children?

**Act:**

- What “gifts” will you give your children this week?

## **THTM #18: Grow happy kids (Child nutrition)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Parental actions have a great impact on their child's life.
- Small, everyday actions can have a big return in terms of a child's health and happiness.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Any parent.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- If you were to offer advice to a new mother, what things would you tell her are important for "growing" a healthy child?
- What advice was offered to you when you became a mother?

#### *Idea for a group:*

- Once upon a time, there were three men breaking stones. A passerby asked: "What are you doing?"  
"Breaking this darn rock," replied the first man.  
"Making a living," replied the second.  
"Building a beautiful home," beamed the third.

The man continued down the road where he saw three parents preparing food for their children. He asked: "What are you doing?"

"Making food for my children to eat," replied the first mother.  
"Making food so my child will be full," replied the second.  
"Growing a happy, healthy child," beamed the third.

- What is the difference between the three parents? (Attitude)
- Which parent is likely to take the time to eat as a family, offer veggies with each meal and make sure their children drink water or milk instead of soda?

#### **Dig:**

- What things can you do to "grow a happy, healthy child?"
- (Offer handout and ask them to read the "Top 10 ways to grow happy kids.")  
What do you feel is the most important of the ten listed ways to grow a healthy, happy child? What's missing from this list?
- How can parents grow happy kids by doing these small things everyday?

- What are the challenges that prevent parents and children from eating healthy foods every day? How have you solved those challenges?

**Connect:**

- How do children benefit when parents offer healthy foods consistently?
- How do you feel when you offer healthy foods to your child?
- How do you feel when your child happily eats the healthy foods you've prepared?
- How do you think healthy eating is related to a child's happiness?

**Act:**

- What will you do this week to help your child grow happy?

## **THTM #19: Follow the leader (Role modeling)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Children are “copycats.” They model the behaviors they see.
- Parents are their child’s first teacher of how to eat healthy foods.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Any parent or grandparent.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Ask participants to say “silk” out loud in unison five times. Lead participants as they do this. Then ask: “What do cows drink? Most will say “silk” or “milk”, even though the correct answer is water.
- Read this Spanish proverb to participants: “Habits are at first cobwebs, then cables.” Ask participants to discuss what this means. Sample comments:
  - In the beginning, behaviors are easy to change.
  - Once formed, habits grip people and hold them captive, much like cables
- Children eat 1,640 evening meals before the age of five. During that time, their eating habits are like cobwebs, easy to change. After five, their eating habits are more like cables, with powerful holds on their life and health.

#### **Dig:**

- Which of your children’s eating habits make you feel proud?
- What eating habits do you want to teach your child in the first five years?
- What *activity* habits do you want to teach your child during the first five years of life?
- When do you think you should start teaching your child eating habits?
- Do you have eating or activity habits that you are hoping your child won’t copy? What are they?
- Do you have habits you want your child to copy?

#### **Connect:**

- How much control do parents have over their children’s eating habits?
- In what ways can parents be more influential?
- Some parents think that they can teach their children something that they can’t or won’t do themselves. What do you think about that?

#### **Act:**

- What will you do *today* to establish the eating and activity habits you hope will be as strong as cables throughout your child's life?
- What eating or activity habits will you model for your children during the next week, with the hopes that those behaviors become cables throughout your child's life?

## **THTM #20: Magic cup (Weaning)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Creative thinking may help ease the transition between bottle and cup.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Mothers with infants nine months and older.
- Mothers in the process of weaning infants from bottle feeding.
- Mothers of children still using a bottle past the age of one.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Tell me about a time you've come up with a creative solution to a parenting challenge?
- What are the important milestones for children as they move from infancy to toddlerhood?
- What do you think when you see a preschooler with a bottle? What have you heard others say?

#### *Idea for a group:*

- Suppose you flipped through your television channels and discovered a new show titled "Makeover Magic for Moms." Here's how the show works: mothers present challenges that are frustrating and upsetting and other mothers provide realistic solutions. Would you like to play "Makeover Magic for Moms" now?
- Here's the challenge: "My 19-month-old daughter still wants a bottle before nap and bedtime. She cries inconsolably if I don't give it to her. I try to ignore her, hoping she will fall asleep, but I usually end up taking her on my lap and consoling her with cuddles and a bottle. I need makeover magic to solve this problem."
- What "makeover magic" ideas do you have for this mother? Sample responses:
  - Go to the store and let the child pick out a special cup – the cup they will use instead of the bottle.
  - Allow the child to throw the bottle in the garbage herself. Remind her that the bottle is gone if she asks for it again.
  - Develop other bedtime routines like a warm bath and cuddling with a book. Children like routine.
  - Tell a story or sing to divert the child's attention whenever she asks for the bottle.

- Stop the bottle “cold turkey.” The child may cry for a few days but eventually forget about it. Giving her the bottle in response to crying only prolongs her dependence.
  - Offer only water in the bottle and milk in a cup. Children often want the milk more than water and learn to prefer cups to bottles.
  - Offer a special blanket or play music as the child drifts off to sleep.
  - Tell the child that the “bottle fairy” took the bottle and brought her a “big girl” cup.
  - Celebrate “end of bottle” day. Count down to the big day, explaining that on “end of bottle” day all bottles will disappear and be replaced by new “big girl” cups. Allow the child to select some of the cups in advance of the big day.
  - Mix 50% water with 50% milk, gradually increasing the amount of water in the bottle until the child loses interest.
- Here’s another challenge requiring “Makeover Magic for Moms:”  
 “I’m the very happy mother of a 22-month-old son. He’s my last child. I’ve enjoyed all four of my children but cherish my final moments as a mother of a baby. I know people say my son should be weaned by now. But I’m enjoying my cuddle time with him and know that he feels secure and loved when enjoying his bottle with me. I don’t put him to bed with a bottle and I wipe his teeth after feeding him. Why should I frustrate him and deny myself this wonderful part of mothering so early?”
  - What “makeover magic” ideas do you have for this mother? Sample responses:
    - Cuddle up with a book, tell stories or sing songs with your toddler for some special together time.
    - Talk about your dreams for him as he grows older.
    - Tell him you love him throughout the day so that he feels secure and cherished in many different situations.

**Dig:**

- When do you think it is important for a child to switch from a bottle to a cup?
- Why do you think it’s important for toddlers to use a cup instead of a bottle?
- How is this transition going for you?
- What are some of the challenges you’ve had with introducing a cup? How have you dealt with them so far?

**Connect:**

- What emotional benefits does the bottle represent to some toddlers?
- How can the emotional needs of the *child* be met in other ways?
- What emotional benefits does the bottle represent to some mothers?
- How can the emotional needs of the *mother* be met in other ways?
- How will you feel after you successfully transition your child from the bottle to the cup?
  - Secure, knowing that you are doing what’s right to protect your child’s smile.

- Confident, knowing that your child's trust is being honored.
- Intelligent, knowing that you are taking action to preventing damage to your child's teeth.

**Act:**

- What action will you take this week to help your child use a cup instead of a bottle?

## **THTM #21: Food fights (Picky eating)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Children will stop insisting on the same foods over and over if parents ignore their demands.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Parents whose child wants to eat only one food item meal after meal.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Do you remember any foods that you wanted to eat all the time when you were little? What were they?
- Have any of your children insisted on the same food over and over? How does this make you feel?

#### *Idea for a group:*

- Let's start with the story of two moms. Both mothers face the same challenge but choose to handle it in different ways. Here how mother #1 handles a child who insists on eating only one food item meal after meal. The children in this story love peanut butter sandwiches and insist on eating them every meal for weeks.
- Here is how Mother #1 handles the situation: (Read the following story.)

<b>Story #1</b>	
<u><b>Child</b></u>	<u><b>Mother</b></u>
I want a peanut butter sandwich.	You had a peanut butter sandwich for breakfast today and for every meal yesterday. You're getting grilled cheese instead.
I want a peanut butter sandwich.	I said no. Didn't you hear me?
I want a peanut butter sandwich.	Eating the same food everyday for all three meals is not healthy. You need to eat the foods I give you.
I won't eat anything but a peanut butter sandwich.	Then you'll go straight to your room.
I want a peanut butter sandwich.	

I'll won't eat anything else.

OK, I will give you a peanut butter sandwich. But you have to eat something different at dinner.

- How do you think this mom feels about her situation?
- What do you think will happen at the next meal with this mother and child? What should the mother have done differently?
- Now, let's see how a different mother handled the same situation. (Read the following story.)

### Story #2

Child

Mother

I want a peanut butter sandwich.

I know you love peanut butter, but doesn't this look good? I made this yummy grilled cheese sandwich...and I have these delicious apple slices.

I want a peanut butter sandwich.

I'll put your grilled cheese sandwiches and apples here. I bet the apple slices would taste great dipped in peanut butter.

I want a peanut butter sandwich.

Why don't you try what you have on your plate? If you don't like it, you don't have to finish it.

I want a peanut butter sandwich.

(Ignores demand.)

I want a peanut butter sandwich.

Sister Sally, you seem to really like those apple slices. Does the grilled cheese taste good?

I want a peanut butter sandwich.

Let's go to the park and play in a little while. I'll let you climb the slide by yourself today.

- How do you think this mom feels about her situation?
  - What did Mother #2 do differently to handle the same situation? How do you feel about how she handled this situation?
  - Which child will likely be willing to try a different food at the next meal? Why?
- Sample responses:
- Behaviors that get attention continue.
  - Behaviors that are ignored stop.
  - Positive attention to the desired behavior helps end the negative behaviors.

- Mother acknowledges and praises sister for trying new foods.
- The child was trying to show his independence and the mother provided another way of being independent. (Allowing the child to climb the slide by himself at the park.)

**Dig:**

- What are some of the ways you've tried to deal with your child's picky eating?
- What are a parent's responsibilities when faced with a picky eater?
- Will children really starve if you don't give into their demands for the same food meal after meal?
- What are some ways that parents can get children to try new foods?? Sample responses:
  - Encourage, but don't force, kids to try new foods
  - Offer new foods alongside favorite foods
  - Offer a small amount of each food on the plate
  - Keep trying...children's preferences change over time
- What may happen when parents ignore a problem behavior—like demanding the same food over and over? Sample responses:
  - The behavior may get worse before it gets better. The child is accustomed to getting attention for the behavior and may temporarily increase it before eventually decreasing it.
  - Eventually, the behavior goes away when attention to it ceases.

**Connect:**

- Why do children ask for the same foods over and over?
- Why is it a good idea to not make a big deal out of picky eating?
- Children little control over their lives. The food they eat may be one thing that they can control. What can you do to allow a child to have a part in deciding what to eat?
- How will you feel when your child tries a new food that you've been offering for a while? And likes it?

**Act:**

- What behaviors will you ignore this week?
- What behaviors will you give positive attention?
- What is one thing you'll try this week to introduce a new food to your child?

## **THTM #22: Balance takes practice (Fast food)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Fast foods are “sometimes” foods.
- Children grow best when offered “everyday” foods often.
- Parents can balance “sometime” fast foods with “everyday” foods.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Any parent.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Let’s do a fill in the blank game. I’ll read the first half of the sentence; you fill in the second half.
  - When I give my children fast food three nights in a row, I feel \_\_\_\_\_.
  - When I give my children soda instead of milk, I feel \_\_\_\_\_.
  - When I give my children fruit instead of sweet desserts, I feel \_\_\_\_\_.
  - When I give my children vegetables instead of French fries, I feel \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **Dig:**

- We all know that fruits, veggies and milk are better for children than sweet desserts, French fries and soda. We feel better about ourselves as parents when we serve healthy foods instead of fast foods. We sometimes feel guilty when they eat too many fast foods.
- What can parents do when children beg for something like fast food meals (and the fun prizes that often accompany them), especially when their friends have them regularly?
- Fast foods have become part of many busy families. How can busy parents balance the convenience and fun of fast foods—“sometime foods”—with the “everyday foods” like fruit, vegetables and low-fat milk that children need?

#### Sample responses:

- Order milk instead of soda at fast food restaurants
- Order a small instead of a large French fries
- Share a small French fries between children
- Order apple slices or other healthy option instead of French fries
- Take slice apples or chopped vegetables with you to fast food restaurants
- Pick one night a week for fast food eating and eat at home on other nights
- Go to fast food restaurants that feature playlands so children can burn up extra calories in active play

**Connect:**

- Imagine that a young child—about four years old—and his mother are at a fast food restaurant. He asks for a hamburger, soda and large French fries. Mom smiles and orders a hamburger, milk and apples. The boy protests. Mom explains that she loves him very much and wants the best for him. Children have an amazing ability to learn lessons from parents. What lessons might this young child learn from a mother who insists that her child drink milk instead of soda, and eat apples instead of French fries? Sample responses:
  - Mom cares very much about me and is willing to stand up to my protests because she wants the best for me. I may not tell mom, but I like knowing that she cares for me.
  - Mom is fun. She lets us eat out at fun fast food restaurants but makes sure we are eating foods that are good for us. She thinks about everything because she is a great mom!
  - Mom knows what is best for me.
  - It is important to do what is right, even if it doesn't feel good at the moment.
- We started with a fill-in-the-blank activity. Let's end with one, but with a new twist:
  - When I give my child a love of milk instead of soda, I will feel\_\_\_\_\_.
  - When I give my children a desire for fruit instead of sweet desserts, I will feel\_\_\_\_\_.
  - When I give my children a love of vegetables instead of an obsession for French fries, I will feel\_\_\_\_\_.

**Act:**

- What will you do next time you go to a fast food restaurant to keep the balance?
- If you do eat more fast food than you think you should, what fun things can you do with your family to balance it out?

## **THTM # 23: Pester power (TV advertising)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Commercials connect foods with positive feelings.
- Commercials encourage children to “pester” their parents to buy the product being advertised.
- Parents want to please their children and may be tempted to buy foods that they think will make them happy.
- Parents who offer healthy foods show love for their children.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Parents of toddlers and older children.
- Parents who buy unhealthy snacks and foods for their children.
- Parents of children who watch lots of TV and are exposed to lots of food commercials.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Think back to when you were a kid. Were there any foods that you begged your parents to buy? What kind of foods were they?
- Do your children beg you for certain foods when you're at the supermarket? What kinds of foods are they? How do they know about them?
- What are some of the most memorable advertisements for foods that you can think of?

#### **Dig:**

- We often attach feelings and personalities to foods.
- What foods do you associate with love?
- How do commercials connect food and love, happiness or other positive feelings?
- What experiences, traditions or beliefs have caused you to associate love with those foods?
- At what age do you think babies or children are being influenced by ads?
- What food commercials do your children especially love? How do the commercials make them want that food?

#### **Connect:** (Offer handout at this point)

- Commercials are very good at attaching feelings to foods, especially for the ones they are selling. Children are especially vulnerable to commercials and often pester parents to buy the featured foods.

- How do you feel about commercials promoting foods by attaching positive feelings to them?
- How does it feel to not give in every time your child asks for a food that may not be so healthy?
- What foods do parents offer that *really* show love for their children?
- Which would you be more proud of— offering healthy foods or buying frequently advertised treats?
- Ultimately, who do you think has more influence on your child’s food choices...you or the TV?

**Act:**

- What can you do to counter the “pester power” that commercials encourage?
- Offer handout. Quickly review tips, reinforcing practical ways parents can show children the greatest love of all—offering healthy foods. Do any of these ideas seem realistic? How can these ideas become a reality for you and your child. What might be barriers? (Brainstorm solutions)
- What will you do next time your child pesters you to buy something he or she saw in a commercial?

## **THTM #24: Baby diaper (Educating grandparents)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Times have changed. What were considered “best practices” in parenting have changed.
- Parents may need to assert their role as the decision-maker for their children.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Parents struggling with grandparents or relatives telling them how to provide care to their child that is inconsistent with current practices or parental wishes.
- Grandparents.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

How has your relationship with your parents or other family members been since you’ve become a parent?

- What gifts do grandparents and other older family members give us?

#### **Dig:**

- What parenting advice have you received? What have you done with that advice?
- What has worked for you in the past when talking with grandparents who insist on practices that aren’t consistent with best practices today or your wishes?
- (Offer handout to participants.) How could you use this quiz with your grandparents to resolve conflict over how to care for your baby and children?

#### **Connect:**

- Respect for grandparents is important. How do you balance well-meaning advice from grandparents that isn’t consistent with “best practices” of caring parents today with your need to protect your child from potential harm?
- How does it feel to know that you are the most important person in making decisions for your child?
- How will making decisions based on what YOU feel is best impact your child’s future?

#### **Act:**

- What will you do differently with in your next conversation with grandparents over how to care for your baby or children?

- How will you set boundaries this week with well-meaning grandparents so that your children are as healthy as they could be?
- What advice would you give a parent dealing with a grandparent or caregiver who thinks they know best?

## **THTM #25: Seesaw (Healthy childhood weight)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Active play helps children keep fit.
- Parents help children develop a love for active play.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Any parent.
- Parents concerned about their child's weight.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Parents constantly struggle to provide what their children need. What do you think are the key things children need in order to be happy and healthy throughout life?
- What do you do to spend time with your child? How do you think spending time together benefits your child?

#### **Dig:**

- You don't have to spend much time with toddlers to know they are often born with a love of being active. Why do some children become less active as they get older? Sample responses:
  - Limited space for active play.
  - Unsafe neighborhoods for children to play outside.
  - Elimination of playground time at child care centers and schools.
  - Parents are too busy to take children to parks and open play areas.
  - Television and computers that occupy children so parents can get work done.
- Why is being active so important for children?
- Parents instinctively know to love their child and make them feel secure, valuable and trusting. And they likely know what foods grow healthy children. But what can parents do to help their children develop a love of being active? Sample responses:
  - Be active with them.
  - Make wonderful memories of being active together so activity is associated with positive memories.
  - Be a good role model.
  - Let them know that you crave the great feeling that comes with being active.
  - Establish family traditions around activity like a nightly walk around the block.

- Take daily walks after dinner where families share values and dreams
  - Take children to parks and areas where they can run.
- What kinds of physical activities do you do with your children?

**Connect:**

- How will *your child's life* be better if he has a love of being active and it continues throughout his life?
- How will *your life* be better if you have a love of being active and it continues throughout your life?
- How will you feel when you and your child can enjoy being active together?

**Act:**

- What will you and your child do this week to be active together?
- If the weather or a busy schedule gets in your way of being active with your child this week, what will you do?

## **THTM #26: Greatest show on earth (Role modeling)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Embrace the joys of parenting.
- Children need and want to be with their parents.
- Parents are role models for their children.
- Being active together is a great way to spend more time with your children.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Any parent or caregiver.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Suppose a pregnant woman asked you for advice on raising children. What advice would you share with her? (Allow time for reflection and sharing.)
- (Offer handout to each participant.) Everyday, children are watching their parents, hoping to be exactly like them. It is humbling and amazing to realize the power parents have to create or redefine another human being for all time. “To your child, you are the greatest show on earth.” How does knowing that you are the center of your child’s universe make you feel?”
- What positive habits do you hope your children will learn from you?

#### **Dig:**

- How important do you feel it is for your child to learn the joy of being active?
- What special gifts related to eating or activity would you like to give your child?
- How can parents moderate TV time to leave more time for having fun as a family?

#### **Connect:**

- Parents tell me that family activities that appear simple and common—like taking a walk together or eating as a family—have important emotional and health benefits. What emotional benefits do children get from being active as a family? What emotional benefits do children get from eating together as a family?
- How would your child’s life be better if she learned to love being active? How would your child’s life be different if he developed a life-long love of fruits and vegetables?
- How would you feel as a parent if your child grew up to be an active, fit, healthy and happy adult because of what you did today?

**Act:**

- What will you do this week to be the greatest show on earth for your child?
- What will you do this week to help your child you are center stage in her life?

## **THTM #27: Sensible weight-loss (Weight management)**

### **What is the key message?**

- There are simple things you can do to lose the extra pounds.
- Following a healthy plan for weight loss can set a good example for young children and affect their eating and activity patterns as they grow older.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Any parent struggling with weight loss for themselves or their child.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- Imagine that one year has passed. You are sitting on exactly the same chair as today, but you are ten pounds lighter. How would you feel about this?
- What if I told you that it was possible to drop ten pounds in a year without making major changes?
- Do you think it is possible to lose ten pounds in a year without a lot of effort?

#### **Dig:**

- What have been some of your successes and/or challenges with weight loss?
- (Offer handout to each participant.) Please take a look at all the ways to cut 100 calories each day. Could you see yourself cutting calories in these ways?
- Any guesses on how many pounds you would lose in a year just by cutting 100 calories a day? (The average person would lose about 10 pounds a year by cutting 100 calories a day.)
- Suppose the year flew by and you were sitting in the same exact chair as today, but were 20 pounds lighter. How would you feel about that?
- You can lose weight by being more active AND by eating less. The column on the right has ways to cut 100 calories. The column to the left has ways to burn more calories. By cutting food calories and burning more calories through increased activity, you can drop 20 pounds in a year. Do you think this is possible?

#### **Connect:**

- Can you imagine you and your child doing the activities listed in the first column together? If done together, how would you child benefit while you're burning calories?
- We all know that carrying extra weight can slow us down. But how does carrying extra weight impact how we feel about ourselves? Sample responses:
  - Negative self image
  - Low energy

- Hurtful self talk
- Low self worth
- Low confidence
- Fear of what others say about us
- Feel less important or successful than others at normal weight
- How would your children's lives be different if you felt better about yourself and your weight?
- How will you feel when you achieve success?

**Act:**

- What will you do this week to burn calories, strengthen your family bond and help your child develop a love of being active?
- What words can you say to yourself each day to urge yourself to action?

## **THTM #28: Happy smiles (Healthy snack ideas)**

### **What is the key message?**

- Children learn to enjoy healthy snacks if offered to them consistently.
- Too many “treats” may bring short term smiles to children but long-term problems.
- Offering healthy snacks to children make mothers feel proud and happy.
- Offering healthy snacks makes a difference to a child’s life.

### **Who should receive this message?**

- Any parent or caregiver.

### **How can this message be used?**

#### **Open:**

- What kinds of foods do you think of when you hear the word “snack” or “treat”?
- What kind of treats can be healthy?

#### *Idea for a group:*

(Give each participant one Post-it™ note pad and pen when they arrive. You can also do this activity using a poster board or marker.)

- Every parent is an expert on snacks. Let’s make a list of some snack ideas you have tried or would like to try. Please write at least three snack ideas for children on the Post-it™ note pad, putting only one snack idea on each piece of paper. (Collect the Post-it™ notes with snack ideas written on them. Put them all on poster board or the wall. Note: Using Post-it™ notes allows you to discuss the snack choices without identifying who suggested them. But some participants may be hesitant to write their responses. If you think writing may be an issue, do this activity verbally.)
- Which of these snacks would be considered healthy snacks? Which would be less healthy snacks? (Position the healthy snacks in one column and less healthy snacks in a second column on the poster board or wall.)

#### **Dig:**

- Who has the most influence over the types of snacks or treats your child eats?
- How does your child react when offered a healthy snack like fruit, vegetables, yogurt or whole wheat bread? How does that make you feel as a mother?
- How does your child react when offered a less healthy snack?
- How does your child’s reaction to unhealthy snacks make you feel as a mother?

- How do your child’s reactions to foods affect your decisions as a parent?

**Connect:**

- What commercials have you and your children seen for healthy snacks—things like oranges, grapes, raisins, string cheese, yogurt, whole wheat bread or cut up fruit?
- How does it feel to know that it is the healthy snacks that make children smile on the inside—and lead them to a healthy future.
- How does it feel to be the most influential person in helping your child develop a love of healthy foods?

**Act:**

- What snacks will you offer your child this week?
- How will you feel when you offer your child healthy snacks this week?
- How can you make healthy snacks “treats”? How can you make them something children will ask for – and you feel good giving?

**THTM #29: Mommy, can I have some more? (Ground beef recipes)**

**THTM #30: Mommy, please make this again (Chicken recipes)**

**THTM #31: Mommy, this is the best meal ever! (Pork recipes)**

**THTM #32: Mommy, please pass the beans (Vegetarian)**

**THTM #33: Morning time (Breakfast recipes)**

**What is the key message?**

- “Investment” cooking—making larger amounts of core foods and dividing them into multiple meals-- makes serving healthy foods easier.
- Parents who prepare healthy meals for their children feel good about their offering their children the best.

**Who should receive this message?**

- Any parent or caregiver, especially those who say they don’t have the time or energy to cook.

**How can this message be used?**

**Open:**

- How do you decide what you and your family will have for dinner?
- What is it like in your home as you get ready for dinner?

*Idea for a group:*

- Anyone read “Dear Abby?” ( “Dear Abby” is a daily column where a wise woman—Abby—answers readers’ questions.)

Suppose you were hired to be the guest write for “Dear Abby” and you received this letter:

Dear Abby,

I have the world’s best child. I want to be the world’s best mother. My problem is finding time to cook meals. I know healthy foods like fruits, veggies, milk and meat are best for us. But at the end of a busy day, the fast food drive through is my best friend. I want to feel good about what I serve, not guilty. Help! How can I cook healthy meals at the end of a long day? Signed, Lost in Fast-Foodville

- What advice do you have for this busy mother?

**Dig:**

- When you think about cooking and preparing meals, what are the pros? What are the cons?
- Does it really make a difference if parents prepare and serve meals to their children? How? At a young age, can children really know the difference?
- What would make it easier for you to prepare more meals at home?

**Connect:**

- How do you feel when you and your children have finished a fast food meal of burgers or chicken, french fries and soda?
- How do mothers who prepare healthy meals for their children feel?
- (Offer recipe handouts.) These handouts feature “investment cooking” recipes. That means you can make larger amounts of core foods like meats or beans and then divide those foods into three smaller meals. Tuck them in the refrigerator or freezer and pull them out later. Presto—fast meals that come from your loving hands but without a lot of work or time. All recipes are guaranteed to be kid-pleasers and healthy.
- “Investment” recipes suggest that there is a pay off later—a dividend. How does investment cooking reward mothers? Children?

**Act:**

- Which of these recipes do you think you’d like to try this week?
- What will you do this week to make meal preparation a little easier for you and your family?

**THTM # 32: Mommy, please pass the beans (Vegetarian)**  
*Additional Group Idea for Investment Cooking with Beans*

**What is the key message?**

- Buy, make and serve beans often.

**Who should receive this message?**

- Any parent or caregiver.

**How can this message be used?**

*Idea for a group:*

**Open:**

- I am so excited! I want to share the news of a new miracle food. It sounds almost too good to be true—but I will let you be the judge of that. Here's what I know to be true about this miracle food:
  - Great for weight loss
  - Low in calories, fat and cholesterol
  - Inexpensive
  - Prevents constipation
  - Easy to prepare
  - Promotes healthy blood
  - Good for blood circulation
  - Filling—a special benefit when grocery money is tight
  - Protects you from cancer
  - Good for the environment
  - Almost never causes allergies
- You are probably thinking that this miracle food must be expensive. Or difficult to find. Or perhaps you are thinking children wouldn't like it. But this miracle food is very inexpensive, easy to find anywhere and children love it.
- Any guesses about what this miracle food could be?
- (Offer handout to all participants.) Beans are a miracle food and a “best friend” to busy mothers who want to serve healthy and good food their families.

**Dig:**

- With all those attributes that add up to miracle status, why don't we eat more beans?
- Does anyone have a favorite way of preparing beans that their family loves?
- How can we fit more beans into our daily meals?

**Connect:**

- How would you feel if you made one of these recipes this week and discovered that your children loved it?

**Act:**

- Which bean recipe is tempting you?
- What will you need to purchase to make it this week?