**Nutrition and Development:**

**Help Me Grow**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Who** | WIC Participants / Family.  Facilitated by nutritionists or nutrition assistants. |
| **Why** | Nutrition affects every aspect of child development. A child’s nutritional needs start even before pregnancy and deficiencies in certain nutrients early in life may lead to irreversible developmental delays. Food insecurity also plays a role in brain development.  This class encourages WIC participants to provide their children with consistent healthy meals and loving support. It also helps parents identify signs of developmental delay and know when and how to seek support. |
| **Time** | 20 minutes |
| **Setup** | Circle or rows of chairs |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Objectives** | By the end of this session, participants will:   * Identify at least one nutrient that plays a role in brain development. * Know how to identify developmental milestones up to age 5. * Name at least one local resource to seek information regarding child development. |
| **Lesson Overview** | 1. **Opening & Overview** 2. **Pregnancy** 3. **Infancy and Childhood** 4. **Developmental Milestones** 5. **Seeking support** 6. **Closing** |
| **Materials** | * Track Your Child’s Developmental Milestones handout |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1. Opening & Overview** | “Good morning/afternoon. My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for coming to class today. We are going to be talking about nutrition and development. This class will take about 20 minutes. Before we begin, **what questions do you have about today’s class?**” |
| **2. Pregnancy** | “With a show of hands (raise your hand) **who here thinks nutrition has an effect on your child’s development?**  **At what age do you think nutrition starts to affect a child’s development?**”  (Allow for answers)  “A child’s nutritional needs start before birth. How a woman eats during pregnancy can affect her child’s development throughout their lifetime! Poor nutrition during pregnancy can lead to a premature delivery and low birth weight.  Pregnancy also increases certain nutrient needs such as folic acid. **Who here has heard of folic acid?**” (raise your hand) “**Can anyone tell us why it is important to consume folic acid before and during pregnancy?**”  (Allow for answers)  “Folic acid is a vitamin that directly contributes to brain development, especially during the first trimester. A deficiency in folic acid at this time can lead to birth defects and possible delay in brain development. If you are trying to get or already are pregnant, a daily supplement is recommended, but the vitamin is also found in fortified grains and cereals.” |
| **3. Infancy and childhood** | “The first two years of a child’s life includes very rapid stages of growth and development. More than half of an infant’s energy intake from food is used for brain growth!  Breast milk or properly mixed formula provide all the nutrients needed for the first six months of life. But when foods are introduced, it is important to remember that babies and children need a balance of nutrients to promote brain development.  Good early nutrition can protect the brain from stress and help a child do well in school. Sugary, greasy, and salty snacks in place of healthy foods, however, can lead to nutrient deficiencies and can impair a child’s development.  The most common nutrient deficiency in the world is iron deficiency or anemia. **Who here has heard of anemia?**  Untreated anemia over time may lead to delayed brain and physical development in children because extra iron is needed during growth spurts.  As much as they need good nutrition, babies and children need loving and consistent care-giving.  **What are some examples of activities you can do with your children to promote healthy development?**”  Possible Answers:  Read to them  Ask questions  Sing together  Practice the alphabet  Practice counting  Practice shapes and colors  Visit interesting places  Play games or puzzles together  Limit screen time |
| **3. Develop-mental Milestones** | “It is important to identify developmental delays as early as possible in order to seek support if needed.” (Pass out handout). “For example, a child who is one year old should be able to copy sounds or say words such as ‘mama’ or ‘dada’. But a three-year-old can carry a conversation using two to three word sentences. By age four, your child might be able to tell stories, follow instructions, and play well with other children.  Sometimes doctors are able to identify if there is a concern at a regular check-up, but if you ever have a question about your child’s development you should **always ask**! You spend the most time with your child and may notice something that the doctor doesn’t.” |
| **4. Seeking Support** | “If you are concerned or simply have questions about your child’s development or behavior, there are many resources available to you in Alameda County such as Help Me Grow. This program provides free support in helping to identify developmental concerns and connect you with the services needed to support your child.” |
| **3. Closing** | “Today we discussed how nutrition impacts your child’s development, how to identify developmental concerns, and where to seek support.  **What is one thing you learned today about your child’s development?**” |