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**The importance of a healthy diet for pregnant women**

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Notes to broadcaster

This script is a transcription of an interview conducted on Radio Kafo Kan in Bougouni, Mali. The host interviewed Mrs. Coulibaly Fatoumata Koné, who works at a community health centre Bougouni.

The interview covers several topics related to ensuring a healthy pregnancy, including foods to include in a healthy diet, how often pregnant women should eat, dietary sources of iron and other nutrients, the importance of iron tablets, and the importance of prenatal visits.

If you are creating your own programs on healthy pregnancies, talk to nutritionists, pregnant women, and others with experience in this area. You may wish to ask them the following questions:

* What kinds of nutrients are most important to pregnant women and what are the most affordable and accessible foods that contain these nutrients?
* What are the symptoms of nutrient deficiencies?
* What other health problems do pregnant women typically face?
* Do you have any general advice for pregnant women to stay healthy?

Estimated duration with music, intro and extro, is 10 minutes.

**MusiC:** On Nutrition

**OUMAR CISSE:**  Good evening, everyone. Right now we have our doctor with us in the studio and we welcome him.

Please introduce yourself to the audience.

**Nutritionist:** I am Mrs. Coulibaly Fatoumata Koné, known by everyone as Mama. I work at TRIPANOSO *(Editor’s note: a community health centre)*.

**OUMAR CISSE:** Mama, we welcome you and are very happy to have you with us tonight. I know that you understood the theme dealt with in the vox pops to the talk with our doctor. Knowing that your work at the hospital is primarily in this direction, tell us more about nutrition for pregnant women!

**Nutritionist:** Our pregnant women need to eat nutritious foods such as the leaves mentioned by the audience and which we all find in our community.

In addition to nutritious food, they must also take the iron tablets that they are provided at the hospital.

**OUMAR CISSE:** It's clear that a pregnant woman is feeding herself in addition to one or more other people, but how often should she eat? Does she have to eat three times as well as the others, or how many times?

**Nutritionist:** The pregnant woman should eat at least five times a day and whenever she feels the need. She should eat as many times as possible.

**OUMAR CISSE:** Tell us about the importance of the iron tablets that you give to pregnant women and that we call "blood-raising tablets" in the pregnant woman's diet?

**NUTRITIONIST:** Iron is very important in a pregnant woman's diet. It is commonly known in Bambara (*Editor’s note: the local language*) as a blood-boosting tablet. It fortifies the pregnant woman's blood a lot and has a great impact in the pregnant woman's diet, in addition to other nutritious foods.

**OUMAR CISSE:** In which foods within reach can we find the iron we are talking about in abundance, free of charge or at low cost?

**Nutritionist:** It can be found here at home. In our market gardens and gardens that women and men grow, we find a lot of iron in the leaves that we eat that are green in colour such as bean leaves, spinach leaves, baobab leaves and …

**OUMAR CISSE:** Sweet potato leaves …

**NUTRITIONIST:** … Yes, sweet potato leaves, African eggplant leaves … we find it in all these green leaves and all these leaves are within our reach and we even sell them at the market sometimes. Let's eat them in addition to other nutritious foods.

**OUMAR CISSE:** That is good then!

**Nutritionist:** Yes, that's what's good for our pregnant women. It strengthens the blood a lot and increases it too.

**OUMAR CISSE:**  What else can we add to the pregnant woman's diet to prevent iron deficiency and constant dizziness?

**NUTRITIONIST:**  We can add fruits and some tubers such as orange potatoes, potatoes, fish—and she can eat meat and eggs as well.

**OUMAR CISSE:** What about water?

**Nutritionist:** Pregnant women should drink a lot of water.

**OUMAR CISSE:** OK.

**Nutritionist:** Yes, water has a significant impact on her health. She must be very careful with food that is improperly preserved with unclean utensils, or soiled by flies or insects to avoid harming herself and her child's health.

**OUMAR CISSE:** So she has to properly store the rest of the food as well?

**Nutritionist:** Yes, absolutely.

**OUMAR CISSE**: And if the pregnant woman can afford it, can she include other things?

**Nutritionist:** If she …

**OUMAR CISSE:** … Or her husband.

**Nutritionist:** … can afford it, she can add raw vegetables such as cucumber and tomato which are grown in abundance, and she can also eat papaya and banana as well. All these can be added to the green leaves, all of these fortify her health, but their excessive consumption could also be harmful to her as well.

**OUMAR CISSE:** So she has to eat as much as she wants and when she feels like it (LAUGHS).

**Nutritionist:** Yes, she must eat enough because she is not alone. But she must not forget and neglect antenatal visits either, and should especially refrain from thinking that thanks to all the food available in abundance, she doesn't have to go to the hospital. No, the two complement each other.

**OUMAR CISSE:** Many men would like to join their wives during pregnancy in their nutrition, but we notice in our community that the sisters-in-law and parents-in-law especially interfere in this and consider it to be a weakness of the man and prevent him from doing so. What do you think needs to be done?

**Nutritionist:** This should not be considered a big deal by the family. The in-laws and the family should be made to understand that they should not prevent the pregnant woman and her husband from engaging in these nutritional practices at home. They should assist them rather than prevent them from doing so, because this will effectively combat iron deficiency during pregnancy and bring relief to the whole family.

**OUMAR CISSE:** In your past interviews here, you talked a lot about the importance of improved porridge for the child. Is this porridge also suitable for the pregnant woman since we have ready market access to all the cereals that go into its preparation?

**NUTRITIONIST:** Of course, it can also be eaten by the pregnant woman.

**OUMAR CISSE:** OK!

**NUTRITIONIST:** And yes, it's as important in the pregnant woman's diet as it is for the child and it's made from our local cereals.

**OUMAR CISSE:**  Is it because of her pregnancy or her husband's special attention to her that she has to put up with and do a lot of household chores within the family that are inappropriate for her?

**Nutritionist:** Oumar, these situations are not good at all.

We really need to sensitize our heads of families, mothers-in-law, and husbands first so that they provide the pregnant woman with support with regard to her nutrition—so the whole family comes together to support her in this regard.

We must also tell them not to make pregnant women work until they are exhausted. We do not say that they should not work, but they should not do tough chores like carrying heavy items. They can work, but not perform tasks that are too much for them in their condition.

**OUMAR CISSE:** If you look at our pregnant women, especially the young girls, they seem to be ashamed of their pregnancy—they wear very tight clothes to hide their bellies. I don't know why they do this. Can you tell us about the dangers of this practice?

**NUTRITIONIST:** Oumar, we talk to pregnant women about this during their visits all the time. There are even those who go to their visits with clothes that are so tight that they have difficulty breathing.

**OUMAR CISSE:** OK!

**Nutritionist:** In this case, they are told to put on loose clothes that will make it easier for them to breathe and for the child to breathe as well. When the mother is not well, the child is probably not well either.

We sensitize young girls against hiding because of their pregnancy—it is really not something to be ashamed of.

**OUMAR CISSE:** Great. Thank you very much. 

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