Interviewer: What is your understanding about the term being healthy

Response: my basic understanding about the term being healthy means having a healthy eating habit and staying in a neat environment. Developing safety measures about cleaning, sanitising your hand, disinfecting things you use most especially when you have got kids. You have to learn to tidy up everywhere you are and things you use. Theres also the aspect of eating healthy, eat fruits, drink a lot of water. No drinking, no fizzy drinks, even if you want to, then take the ones with low calories

Interviewer: What is your current understanding about the term healthy eating?

Response: with my condition now, the term healthy eating means a lot to me and my baby. To make the baby feel healthy I have to eat a lot of fruits and vegetables. Reduce my carbohydrate, eat something that provides me more of iron and protein, fibres as well. Not too much carbohydrates, if I do not want to have pregnancy complications and deficiencies.

Interviewer: would you say that your eating habit has changed since being pregnant?

Response: yes, it has changed. There are some fruits that I don’t like eating but because of my condition I have to blend it and use it to make smoothie as part of my intake. For instance, I don’t like eating kiwi but now I take it. Stuff like cranberry, blueberries, I don’t really like them, but I take them now. I was used to just watermelon prior to the pregnancy but now I take the other melon as well. The yellow melon and some other fruits that I don’t remember their names, because im from Africa I don’t remember their names but I take them now. I take some vegetables like carrots as well. I love carrots but I don’t take them too much. I make sure I have like maybe one in a day. I don’t like spinach but now I eat it. I don’t like the taste in my mouth, but now I eat it.

Interviewer: would you say that your eating habit changed because of the baby? It wasn’t because of cravings or anything

Response: no it wasn’t because of cravings. I changed my eating habit because of the baby. I learnt to eat this stuff because of the baby.

Interviewer: Is there any other thing that could have caused changed to your eating habit?

Response: nothing else caused the change. I would have said finance but we are getting fruits voucher for free from the community support. So, in that aspect its not finance. Or maybe basically maybe without that I might not put the pressure of getting healthy because of the baby but with the vouchers it makes it easier to be healthy for the baby. I have to get the fruits and force myself to eat it.

Interviewer: would you have bothered to eat fruits and vegetables if you didn’t have access to the fruits vouchers.

Response: I would have bothered but I would not be consistent and not in the same quantities. Now I’m going extra length to do it because I have got the support. But basically if I am the one to do it for myself, I would have bought smaller quantities of fruits, be selective. But now when I go to the market, I make sure I buy. I might buy a variety of 8 fruits. With that it motivates me to get more.

Interviewer: is the fruits voucher under the sure start or a community initiative?

Response: it is a community initiative from PACT group. They give it to parents.

Interviewer: so are there any other vouchers that they give?

Response: there is a lot of support coming from them, but that one is general. It depends on what your needs are and what you ask for. The vouchers are basically general parents who have got kids, toddlers and pregnant women.

Interviewer: do you have to be a certain kind of parent to qualify for this or all parents qualify for that or anybody can qualify.

Response: Basically, we registered with proof that our children are here. So when I registered I had to register with our children’s red book.

Interviewer: How many children have you got?

Response: 2

Interviewer: Do you have any support from the children’s father?

Response: I used to get support from the little ones father until about 6 months ago when it stopped.

Interviewer: what other things do you think would have caused you to change your eating habits

Response: Maybe health wise. If I had a diagnosis of anything

Interviewer: The national institute of health and care excellence, maternal and child nutrition guidelines state that pregnant women attending antenatal and health visitor appointments are given advice on how to eat healthily. With this in mind, I would want to ask what type of healthy eating advice have you been given before?

Response: due to the lockdown, there has not been much face to face appointments, so all they do is phone contacts or you go for scan and maybe check-ups but not like it was when I was pregnant for the little one. They have however given advice that we eat something healthy because of our iron levels. Like the previous blood test before the last one I went for, when they were booking me for my 28th week appointment. They gave me a leaflet of things I should be eating before I come in for my 28th week appointment. Things like rice, pasta, I should eat it with veg or not eat it at all. I should try to eat fruits and cereals that have fibres. They have a lot of list I wrote, so I followed that. Because they said they didn’t want to do my test and realise that my iron levels were low. My blood test had to give them an assurance that my iron levels was enough and getting ready for labour. And incase they wanted to do my blood test, there should be too much of carbohydrates. Things that is proteinous as well. So I followed the guidelines of what they gave me, because I know its for my own good.

Interviewer: so following the guidelines, made you stop eating your traditional foods.

Response: no oooh, I cant go a day without eating my amala and eba. The thing Is, like yesterday I ate amala and ogbono soup. I added a lot of stockfish, kpomo, bitter leaf, crayfish, shaki, kidney. I added a lot of things in the ogbono I prepared. That’s what I used to eat my amala. With that everything will work out well. And when I want to eat rice, I make sure I add boiled egg with it and beef and sometimes I add veggies, I take a portion of veg in the freezer, boil it and add it. Also, when I want to cook beans, I always add sweet corn or eat beans alone. Unlike before, when I used to eat beans and garri or beans and bread but now I can eat just plain beans or add sweet corn to it. I also make beans cake, when I make it, I use pap to eat it. When I use pap, I will make it with fresh milk and I don’t use sugar. If I want to eat pasta, I add veg and sausage, chicken sausage because I am a muslim, boiled egg and I will add beef to it as well. Sometimes I eat mackerel fish. I just try and shovel it together but they cant deny me of my African food, because I am not used to their food. So I just mix it together and try to make it balanced.

Interviewer: does this not make the food quantity too much?

Response: no its not too much. I do not eat everything at once

Interviewer: what form did the advice given to you take? Was it in form of a leaflet

Response: it was a leaflet form that was added to the maternity notes.

Interviewer: did they give you any other advice

Response: yes, they are always asking if anything is giving me concern? Like is there anything I am thinking or bother about? So if I have anything bothering me, I share with them. They just tell me to take it easy because of my condition. Shouldn’t stress too much. I should try and eat well, sleep well and take a lot of rest.

Interviewer: how helpful was the healthy eating advice that you received

Response: to be sincere, its been really helpful. Sometimes we need to learn something new but due to where we are coming from we have been fed something from when we are little. That’s what we are used to, we are not interested in trying something new. We could be reluctant to try something new and it keeps going through the generation but with the fact that I am raising a son here. Sometimes when he gets back from school, he insists on eating something that he had seen in school for instance curry stew. Sometimes I have to learn how to make It for the sake of my son. I am now getting used to it, I cant deny my son if he wants to eat those things. Denying him will make him look like a total stranger to his peers. It is important to make him blend with the environment. For instance also, my son like broccoli, and I was reluctant to try it at first because it looked like a tree. But one day I tried it with rice and I fell in love with it. I realised that I was denying myself of some things. Although I can’t take cauliflower (chuckles). It has been helfup its just a tough decision due to our African blood.

Interviewer: Are you trying to say that our African food is unhealthy?

Response: its is healthy, its just that its made up of mostly starch. Its healthy, it depends on how you know how to mix our food. Our food is more organic, the foods eaten here is more pasteurized. So our foods from where we are coming from is very organic and healthy but it’s just about knowing how to mix it. It’s just about knowing how to mix it so that you do not take a lot of starches.

Interviewer: were you able to adapt the advice to suit your cultural foods?

Response: Yes, I could. I had to go extra miles. The stuff they wrote for instance if I want to eat my eba, they group 1/3 of eba. I would wonder how I would measure my eba.

Interviewer: was eba added to the list?

Response: yes, it was. There was also sandwich but with the brown bread and toast with tuna and a piece of fruit. The eba, garri, fufu should not be more than 130 grams. Eat it with meat, fish and stew. So, I wondered if I wanted to make eba now, I should start weighing it.

Interviewer: which trust is that?

Response: kings college hospital. They have added the African food, but they didn’t add too much of our food. This is a guide used in the kings college hospital.

Interviewer: what do you consider important to you when you are choosing a meal?

Response: availability of finance, culture and time. Sometimes there is craving but what is in your pocket is not up to what can purchase the food, you would have to suspend that till later and go for the next cheaper alternative. Sometimes, you can have all the things ready but you don’t have the time. But I don’t really think that distance counts especially in this my condition. If I really want something and I am craving for it, I will go to any distance to get it.

Interviewer: have you heard about African traditions and myths. Certain foods that are forbidden in pregnancy.

Response: I know about them. It doesn’t work for me. I don’t listen. When I am craving for something, I eat it. God will protect me and the baby. Like snail, there’s no time that I am pregnant that I do not eat snail because I am always craving for it. My mum is here, and she is always shouting (speaks in dialect), your children will be spitting excessively but I don’t listen, and those things do not affect my babies. They do not spit excessively. Sometimes they tell you that you can’t let someone cross over you as a pregnant woman. I followed that particular rule, especially if its someone that I do not like crossing over me. There’s also the one about attaching pin to your cloth when you want to go out as a pregnant woman by 1 o clock on a sunny afternoon. Attach a male stone on your cloth or use pin when you want to go out in the afternoon, but when I got here, I kept asking if there was witch in London, so why would they ask me to use pin on my cloth. But anytime I am visiting my mother, I will ensure that I attach pin to my cloth so that she wont nag. You know that our mothers have an influence on us Africans. I follow all these rules because of my mother. There are other things like pregnant women should not eat from the pot, when I want to have a quick meal and I am eating from the pot. There is a lot of traditions, that have been carried on but I do not think that I will carry that tradition on with my children. Not sure they will even listen at all. However, because we have been raised there, I will have to consider some of the requests. If she is not around, I do not follow the tradition. I listen because I have to listen to them, I do them for the sake of doing but I do not really believe in them. I do not think I will follow the tradition because my children will not even listen to it but because I was raised in Nigeria, I still follow the tradition.

Interviewer: so, what other sources of healthy eating or nutrition advice have you used in pregnancy? Social media, friends, family

Response: internet, but mostly if I want to cook some foods and I do not know how its made. So I can go on the internet and see how it’s made but I have not done any healthy eating research on the internet

Interviewer: in your opinion, what source do you think is the most trusted and relevant source of healthy eating advice.

Response: the one I receive from the midwife and some healthy eating advice I grew up to learn from my elders. Like water drinking and sitting position during mealtimes.