Interviewer: What is your understanding about being healthy about the term being healthy

Response: Ermmm doing exercise, eating moderately okay and stuff like that. Try to get as much work as you can .

Interviewer: So, what is your current understanding of the term healthy eating.

Response: If I put in my own words its basically try to eat moderately, not so much carbohydrate, not so much Protein just to balance everything up. If you eat rice, try to put a lot of salad you understand and when you eat, try to get some exercise. Even if it means just walking around the block and come back. Let me just put it that way.

Interviewer: So would you say are you eating habits has changed since being pregnant.

Response: Yes, it has

Interviewer: What would you say caused the change in the eating habits.

Response: I'm a lot more hungrier than I used to be, because ive got 4 kids like I said to you before. Im very busy, I wake up early, go to work, have to take care of 4 children. Sometimes I forget to eat to be honest. But since ive been pregnant, things have slightly changed. Because now I have to make myself breakfast as well as pack lunch for the kids, you understand so i eat like four times a day now meanwhile before I get pregnant if I get one a day maybe my lucky day I have two meals a day. So yes, this change

Interviewer: What would you say it caused the changing your eating habits.

Response: I this is being pregnant. I want to believe so

Interviewer: Are there any other things that would have caused the changes?

Response: locked down lockdown maybe. Well, during the lockdown. You have nothing. Basically, we have nothing to do apart from waking up, watch tv and eat literally. And sometimes I get to go out a little bit, maybe walk around for 5-10 minutes. Meanwhile, before the lockdown. I work, five days a week, which is Monday to Friday. The only day I get any sort of rest that I don’t go out at all is Saturday. On Sunday I go to church. So you come from that to complete lockdown, it’s a lot of change .

Interviewer: So okay, the National Institute of Health and Excellence 2015 maternal and child nutrition guidelines state that pregnant women attending antenatal and health visitor appointments are given advice on how to eat healthily. With that in mind, ill ask a few questions. What kind of healthy eating advice have you been given before in pregnancy?

Response: When I went to the midwife, I was told eat a little bit more beans which to be fair and completely honest with you, ive not eaten baked beans since I came to this country, so they advise you to eat baked beans. Its not my own cup of tea. They advise you to eat some corn and some okra. I try to substitute what I can. They give you basically a leaflet that show you the kind of food is supposed to be eating and being pregnant, there’s some food that… its not that you don’t eat them but because you are pregnant its difficult to eat them. Take for instance fish, oh I like fish but right now, if I go close to fish im gonna throw up so I wont even go near it. Even though its part of the healthy eating, its part of the protein they told us is good for pregnant women but even a can of sardine can make me throw up so I wont even go near fish. So I’ve tried to substitute the foods I cant eat with what I know how to eat. For example, instead of baked beans I cook my own Nigerian beans its still beans and eat it. You understand what I mean, but there's not a wide range of food when it comes to black culture, let me put it that way or minority ethnic group.

Interviewer: So you said the midwife spoke to you. That advice she gave you, was it in form of a pamphlet or spoken?

Response: She gave me a pamphlet and they talk to you about it. Like you can eat this and you can eat that. You understand, but most of the food on the on the pamphlet is not what I usually eat, to be honest. The only thing that I think is helpful to me in the pamphlet is just sweet corn and okra. That’s it.

Interviewer: So how useful is this advice to you, apparently, you are saying that it wasn't useful to you

Response: sure, you just have to do what’s best for you at the end of the day.

Interviewer: Are there any aspects of that healthy eating information that you received that caused you to make changes to your eating practices?

Response: Ermm yeah, I realized fruit is… im not a really fruity person, I realized that if I cant eat a lot of things eating fruit can help more than eating my own African cuisine you understand. Like eat a lot more fruits, eat a lot more salads. Yeah a little bit yeah

Interviewer: So how helpful was this advice to you personally when you're talking about your culture

Response: About my culture in complete honesty. Talking about culture, assuming I am being advised on how to eat my iyan which is pounded yam, ground rice, yam flour if you like. If I’m given advice on how to eat this in small portions or in a way that will benefit me which is what… I remember when I first signed up for gym before I got pregnant and the instructor was telling us to reduce eating rice. I’m Nigerian, I eat rice like more times than I can count. Its like rice is like food to me. I can eat rice in the morning for breakfast. It doesn’t bother me you understand. I don’t know how to put it. It’s a bit difficult when you are from different culture and from different background. For example if you give me lasagne now you are backing at the wrong tree because im not going to eat it. What I know how to eat, if you can give me advice on it. On how to eat it in a way that its not going to affect me too much. It will be more useful than telling me to eat baked beans. Ive never eaten baked beans, I see it, I give it to my children because obviously they were born here and they were raised in a very different way from me. they eat it in school obviously but I never taste it, I cannot tell you that this is what baked beans taste like. But if you can give me more ermmm food. I know how to how to cook and do the best way to cook it that will not give me this extra fat or make me extra chunky. It will be easier for me than tell me, eat this eat that. I'm not gonna lie to you, growing non from Nigeria. I've never tasted salad until I came to this country. Because salad to them back home is like we are not a goat, why are you eating leaf thats the way we were raised, and it's going to take a lot to Take that mentality away. you understand to take what you know what you know best. It's going to take a lot to take it from me. But instead of taking is away, why cant we find advice on okay if you eat this certain portion of this it will help you out or if you eat certain portion of that or how to make my own poundo yam or how to make my own soup Because my soup is different from the soup you find in Tesco. So how to make all these things in benefit of my own health will be nice. My father in law made a joke on time. He went to the gp and the gp told him. Oh, you need to stop eating red meat and he laughed and he said to me, have you ever seen a black man that doesn't eat meat. Which where we come from if you eaten, you are eating with 4 -5 meat in a meal. its really hard, old habits die really hard. You can't get its add to change your dog to teach an old dog new tricks is going to be very difficult. you understand what I'm trying to say. So instead of forcing this habit on me, why dont you help me with what i know best and help me to change it in a way that will also benefit me. you understand what i mean.

Interviewer: So you speak really passionately about the culture, you know, and you may like some phrases some statements you know that Looks like you have had people advice you on certain aspects of the cultural or asking you to change your culture, which does not suit you.

Response: No

Interviewer: Tell me about your gym experience. When you went to the gym

Response: when I went to the gym, I signed up for the gym because I have a big belle. I'm not a big person, but I have a huge belle. And I was just trying to reduce the instead of wearing waist trainer. Which I don't believe in, so i was trying to see if I can get some exercise and lose weight naturally. So, I signed up to the gym and the trainer came up to us and said, If you really want to lose weight and more effectively you need to stop eating bread. You to stop eating rice, bread I can do without but rice never, because I go wherever I have a rice cooker And I'm going to pick even school run. I just put on my rice, and I'm done by them and that is done. And I'm eating. it’s something I’m used to. It’s not easily something that i can just put away just like that. Even when I was living outside London where there is no African food. I used to travel to London. Once a month or twice a month if you like to buy some food. So that can take it with me and put it in the freezer. Is going to be very difficult to tell somebody especially somebody, i don't know about other culture, but I'm from Nigeria and I can say about my experience about being a Nigerian. it’s going to be very difficult to tell a Nigerian don’t eat meat. It’s going to be very difficult to tell a Nigerian don’t eat rice. It's been very difficult for Nigerian to put their yam away or poundo yam or ground rice or yam flour which is Amala to put it away because this is part of our everyday life. This is what we believe, this is what we are used to. We believe if I eat poundo yam I will be full. We don’t believe in starters and main meal and desserts. We don’t believe in it. I didn’t grow up like that. I grew up eating this one giant meal and that’s it. I’m not used to eating small, small portions of food. I eat my food at a go and I know okay im done. This is my lunch for me its done. For me, its breakfast, lunch and then dinner. That’s it. I don’t believe in starters, what’s starters? I didn’t grow up like that and me now having to adjust to eating small portions of food, its going to be very difficult. Even though when I started the gym I tried a little bit to you know when I cook my jellof rice I try to add salad or if its white rice to put like peas or sweet corn or something like greens or vegetable instead of eating a whole big bowl of rice, I try to put a little portion of rice then put salad on it but that’s about what I can do. I cant really put rice away all together. It’s not gonna work because I don’t really eat other stuff like chips, im not a big fan of chips, im not a big fan of other foods. These are the foods I have known and trusted, its going to be very difficult to put them away altogether and start a new culture. It will be difficult, it will be very very difficult. You very, very difficult. But if I can have somebody to tell me that. Okay. Well, what if you do this is your food. This is what you know. Okay, well, if you do this way, it will help you in this way and this way and this are the disadvantage. That I can understand but telling me to put what I know your away. It will be difficult to put it away.

Interviewer: That's interesting. That's really interesting. So I'm going to talk about social context. So social context is the way People react to things, depending on the environment. So I'm going to ask like this advice that was given to you. Within your social context like within your environment. If this advice was given to you. Let's say in Nigeria, this would, would it have been any useful like the same advice you are given here was given to you in Nigeria would it have been any useful to you

Response: No not at all

Interviewer: That’s a very honest response. Was this advice useful to you or relevant to your beliefs

Response: No

Interviewer: Okay, so can you talk about that a bit

Response: because I think when I was with my first child, I kind of followed everything to the latter pregnant I was a first time mother but after then I was like yeah cool, I just watch the midwife talk and I will go do whatever I want to do. so no, even when I was pregnant with my first child, with pregnancy you get cravings because I have cravings for this, I’m not going to say because the midwife said this I’m not going to eat it. no it’s not going to work for me personally. it won’t work. so the advice doesn’t really do much well you have at the back of your mind this is what I'm supposed to be eating. But at the end of the day when cravings takeover or the food your culture take over its not everybody that has money to buy extra things I have a big family I shop for the month. So Ive already, there’s calculation in my head that I have blah, blah, blah, blah at home. So this is what I need to survive you know. I cant just go to the shop now and say Go to shut and I said, Okay, let's just spend 100 pounds to on some other things know because I've got to manage what I have. And I've got Basically I live on calculation Ive got to calculate everything I make a list of everything I need for your not just for me for the kids as well. So for me to now bring it just extra money to Try to buy extra things is a little bit tricky for me. So I'm just going to manage what I have. Anyways, and just hope for the best. Honestly,

Interviewer: So does your religion prohibit any kind of food.

Response: No I don't eat pork, not because my religion, I'm a Christian , but I just don't eat pork because of what I’ve seen. I grew up in a farm back home. So the way pork is made I know. So for me no that's why I don’t eat pork not because of religion or anything, but because I've seen them grow in the farm and what they and no

Interviewer: Okay, what do you consider important to you. When choosing a meal. So I have distance, time, culture, taste/personal preference, availability and finance, What do you consider the most important and then you can talk about in order of their importance, you know,

Response: Its personal preference. First, what are we if when I get to the shop. The first I'll think about is what I will eat or my husband to eat and what the kids will eat. To be honest, how much it costs does not really come into it, I will try to change the brand if I’m running low on money but yes its not really about the money, its about the preference. What will I eat, if I buy this would I eat it, will the kids eat it? Will my husband eat it? That’s gonna be first thing on my mind, personal preference

Interviewer: And this personal preference is pushed by culture right?

Response: Yes very much yes

Interviewer: So do you live in multi generational household. So do you have your mother living with you or your husband's grandmother.

Response: No just me, my husband and my kids.

Interviewer: So what other sources of healthy eating and nutrition advice have you used in pregnancy. So I have social media like Instagram and Facebook pregnancy blogs Or pregnancy apps have friends I have family around the internet Google and other search engine. So what are the sources of used

Response: I’ve used I have this app called baby club and this Emma’s diary that I downloaded their app and i read about different stories Your milestone and how you are getting on and other peoples talk as well and you have friends and family. Which also give you advice on how to do things, basically.

Interviewer: But they don't talk about food

Response: Oh, well, with friends and family they do talk about food because this they have the same experience and They will try to advise on what they've done that works for them. But because it works for them does not necessarily mean it's gonna work for me but They still offer the advice anyway.

Interviewer: so Have you received advice, Let's see from your family, friends, thinking back to from your first pregnancy and all that Have you received advice from friends.

Response: yeah

Interviewer: So did you use the advice.

Response: Oh, yes. Oh, well, my first pregnancy, there's this drink called supermalt which I love so much and I remember my sister in law was telling me you gonna have chunky babies if you don't put that away. So I asked her why, and she was trying to tell me That even though is a is a very good drink but in pregnancy it might not be such a good thing. Because it will help you to put on weight and not just you but with the baby as well . So yeah, it was a really, really good advice for me.

Interviewer: So you know about African myths? Yeah, like in pregnancy. So some families say you don’t eat snail in pregnancy and some say you don’t eat okra in pregnancy and all those kind of things did you receive those kind of advice in pregnancy

Response: yes, i did but the midwife told me okra is good so i eat it I normally eat okra anyway so it does not make any difference to me. Really, I'm kind of person, if you give me advice or if you talk to him about something. When I'm on my own. I'll sit down and ill table it then i will try to think of everything we spoke about . If you give me value, then I'll take it. If it doesn't, then yeah. you cannot make me do what I don't want to do. That's the kind of person I am. If you give me advice, then I think, okay, it's going to work for me. I'll take it. I've been told not to eat okra. That it was bad for you or any drawing soup , I don't know. But when I was pregnant for my second child, I did take the advice when I was pregnant for my first child. But when I was pregnant with my second child, I did try to eat okra And I see that I'm not going to lie that's the only child that i actually give birth to naturally in all honesty. So I've seen that sometimes because somebody offered you advice does not necessarily mean its right. It is just mean you understood. Like I said before, what works for them might not work for you. you just have to find a balance on what's going to happen was going to work for you or which is the best way for you to go. That's it.

Interviewer: So you haven't used any of those advice at all.

Response: No, I just tried to like use my own personal experience from my first pregnancy. What I've seen what I've eaten. What I think is not good for me. Like for example now beans gives me heartburn, so I'm not going to eat its a minus i don't eat a lost opportunity away. You know, you learn as you go, basically. So as your pregnancy progress as I guess as much children as you have you learn as you go you know what to do. And eventually, you just know what to do yourself. You don't have to listen to anybody anymore.

Interviewer: What sources do you think are the most trusted and relevant sources of healthy eating advice.

Response: I will say stick to the midwife, even though it might not be too helpful, but if you can just listen. In the community I live now, I live in Deptford, its multicultural so you get some midwives that really give you advice on African food. They look at you and the way you look at the leaflet, they will just put the leaflet aside and they will talk to you from I guess from your background if they are from your background. Or lets say they put their profession away for one minute and talk to you as a human being which I really appreciated because its more appreciative to me because they are talking to me from their heart. You can do this and that and you can eat this and that, even though they are not from the same background as you. They try to tell you about the food that you may eat from your own culture that will not harm you or the baby so yeah its much more helpful. But listening to other people might not necessarily because they're not professionals and they just tell me what works for them. And because they are talking about what works for them does not necessarily mean it's going to work for you. It may end harming you. So I would rather listen to the professional that knows what they're talking about. And I want to believe that they have practiced it or they have advised somebody with no side effects. That's why they're sending it to you so that way ill say, just listen to the professional basically and try to do what works for you.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time so far. You've seen the healthy guide, you were given the healthy eating guide in pregnancy. We've asked this question before, but I need you to really talk about you know that healthy eating guide and how you felt about it. It's general influence on you, how you actually felt when you received that guide.

Response: Ermm, i was happy because i have something to do with. Its like a guideline. That's what I'll call. it is not necessarily mean what i will eat but it serves me as a guideline of what to eat and what not to eat. And something, there's some food that we i would normally eat but its on the leaflet to stay away from. So it's not just about what you can eat its about what you're supposed to stay away from as well. Not too much of this not so much of that or don't eat this at all like fizzy drink. For example, it serves me as a guideline to know the circle of food and not try to go out of them. So, yeah. In a way ill just say it’s a guideline, let me just put it that way.

Interviewer: So do you know the risk and consequences of unhealthy eating.

Response: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Can you talk about it.

Response: Before I had my first baby I was a very tiny person. So I eat whatever I want. And I can get away with it. But after my first baby, I realized that I started putting on weight. Ive come to realise that its not all food that need to be eaten. There are some food There's some food. I need to put away. And there's one that you need to eat once in a while. Not just eating everything that you can see to be able to lose weight. Back where I come from being a big person, a big girl, plus size Is like, Oh, you're enjoying life, but I've come to realize when I come to England that is not necessarily mean is a good thing It can really, really be bad thing and and I've worked as healthcare assistant and I've seen the other side of being a big person. So I try to To minimize have some some stuff that normally I wont even think about exercise but i try to join the gym, i try to exercise and i try to reduce the portion of food, even though it’s the same food but I try to eat it in a smaller portion than I used to, to just keep fit. It doesn’t necessarily mean you have to be size 6 but to just make sure you don’t die from a heart attack when you are sleeping because obesity can cause that so try to minimize everything and change my lifestyle in the best way I can just to suit me.

Interviewer: So you mean that's unhealthy eating can cause obesity.

Response: oh yeah

Interviewer: so you talked about weight retention, so retaining some amount of weight you gained in pregnancy. So going through the five pregnancies, have you been able to lose the weight.

Response: Yes, I have. I think in January that I first weight myself, I lost 3 stones because I went all in because looking at my belle back in last may, I looked pregnant and people kept asking me so when is your due date and its just like I have to tell them that oh im not pregnant. I get on the bus and people are standing for me to sit down because they assume that I was pregnant so I just thought you know what, its time for a change so I tried from my train station to work I can actually take a bus but I decided to walk. You know like change some things. When im at home on my day off when im not going anywhere I try to go to the gym at least for 1 hr to just you know to exercise and if I'm at home. Sometimes I just put on like YouTube exercise with me and the kids and ill just tell them let us have fun, but I'm trying to help myself not to not to go into not to go back into been that kind of that big anymore .

Interviewer: So do you feel that compared with previous pregnancies. Do you feel that Covid has had an effect on antenatal care services. The way you are receiving antenatal care services

Response: Its not the same anymore, its not. And i hope it goes back to where it used to be but its not the same anymore. Now for some of the appointments they just call you on the phone. It's not like face to face appointments anymore. And there's limits to what the can do if they can see you face to face, and and they can See the way you are. There's much more, is more helpful for them. They'll give you more advice because they can see you but somebody that is speaking to you on the phone all they can hear is your voice and thats it They don't really see and they can't really know what your going through, but if you can go to the midwife even If you are going through a break down. You can always talk to them. We used to go to the GP. I remember when I was pregnant with my other babies sometimes we go to GP for appointment As a pregnant woman. Now, all of that is cut off. Its just strictly hospital appointment and scan now. And some like sixteen weeks appointment is by phone. So it's not the same way it used to be its not. I don't know, but it's not the same care that we used to get that we're getting I guess probably COVID 19 has wash down most of the The care that we used to get you go to your 16 weeks, appointment. you see your midwife almost every two weeks, they talk to you, you know they see you're feeling If you're breaking down if something is wrong they can pick it up from talking to you. All you do now is go for scan, I didn’t get my pregnancy book until I was 12 weeks which never used to be like that. As soon as you’re pregnant before you get midwife appointment, you get your book, you get everything in order but everything is not like that anymore. Its different, very very changed. Even the pregnancy book, they don’t take it from you anymore. You just tell them you have appointment they check you on the computer and that’s it basically the pregnancy book is useless. So no its not the same, the pandemic has affected a lot of things

Interviewer: So I've talked to some people and they talked about that prior to COVID 19 they had used to receive social support. So friends used to come around and help them in pregnancy, people used to come around. So since the pandemic, all those kind of social support has ended. Is it the same with you?

Response: Oh yeah, I haven’t had anyone around since February. Normally we have this thing called women group, well its not women. Its just me and my sister in law and a couple of friends, Every two weeks we used to meet up, you can meet up in my house, then it's going to be your house next and we used to do that, because we will have children. And when you have kids don't really have circle of friends anymore because of having kids, but So we decided to organize this small group around. There's about 10-15 of us. So it's like you're basically going round 15 people's houses. And its every Friday, you pick up the kids. We just go there to chill, talk, LAUGH, joke you know just help us not to slip into depression as a mother. But since covid has started everything stopped. We tried to zoom call use zoom to call each other, but it's not the same as going to be around other people. It's just been on the phone just talking to everybody and eventually that as well. got taken off because everybody is bored nobody really wants to come on zoom anymore or somebody is doing something or the other person is busy me meanwhile before the pandemic, we have. Even though we take the kids with us, we try to organize like a little toys and stuff for the kids books for the older ones so that they don't bother us so that we can at least you know drink wine, talk. Not to get drunk but to just Understand, to have a social life. That has been taken away so its just school and back home. I'm on maternity leave. So is basically im home all day. so im sleeping all day, so if im not talking to you right now i will be sleeping so my kids dont finish till about 3 in the afternoon or so to be honest this has a lot of effects on mental health as well. But is it i don't know i just hope that all these go away so that we can go back to our normal life

Interviewer: Is there like mental health support available or something.

Response: On the GP. They said they said if you want to speak to someone, but what are you going to talk about, oh, I'm sad, because it cannot go out. There is mental health support available if you want, for my GP anyway because I was told that if you need to talk to somebody but i would rather be around people. than to just talk. Even if you want to talk to somebody for support, they are talking to you on the phone. You can't really go to them to see them face to face. So I rather have my little group. back to have my friday night, every two weeks. You know, it's like it used to be so exciting for me. Like, I look forward to It because it doesn't matter what you wear, i can go in my pyjamas, they are all mothers they understand with no judgment. But even if i go to mental support. What can they do nothing, there's nothing they can really offer so ill rather my little group back than to go to mental support.

Interviewer: So what do you think are your barriers to healthy eating, so what stops you from eating healthy

Response: Culture, my beliefs what I believe. I believe if i eat this eba and this okra soup, ill be full so honestly its culture

Interviewer: so do you think that the food in your culture is not healthy

Response: Not all of it or let me say they are healthy but just the amount that we eat that is not healthy, when you are eating like 4-5 slices of meat with this big pot of eba you understand what I mean. So that’s the part that is not healthy but ive learnt to train myself in a more serious way. Instead of eating poundo yam, I got to find out from a friend of mine on baby club that you can use oat meal, you can blend it up and you can make it, it will actually look like ground rice when you finish making it and I have found another friend, shes from igbo land and she used to bring me okra, and she brought okra to me and said to me, do you know that you can make cauliflower, and you can blend it and you can put small garri on it. It actually tastes like eba but it is very very healthy. Ive learnt from people how to actually make my own food in a very healthy way on a more serious note. I try to adjust even though its not the same for me but I realise that the more I eat them the more I get used to them. And its not as bad as, you know in your mind it’s a bit tricky like oh no this is not what I’m supposed to be eating but the more you make it the more you get comfortable with it and in a more healthy way.

Interviewer: So if you find somebody that tells you that you can eat pounded yam but you can do it in this way so that it's healthy for you, Would that be better?

Response: Yeah, because I really appreciate that.

Interviewer: And you talked about Africans we dont eat leaf. But i think that Africans do eat leaf.

Response: Yes we eat a lot of it in soup. But you know salad, it looks raw, like you didn’t cook it but you know when you want to do your efo or some ugwu inside your okro to make it look nice. I kind of enjoy Igbo food, I don’t know why but I do I kind of enjoy igbo food. I don't know why, but I do and I just like to eat they prepare their food and I've come to really, really enjoy it but Even from some of igbo friend. I've learned that it's not necessarily have to put too much. Maggie, or too much salt in everything that makes it good you can still make your okro with less salt, less maggi Somebody even showed me i think the XO XO Maggie, that its healthy that you can adjust instead of the normal chicken one that we use. so ive come to learn about it. we eat a lot of vegetable to be honest a lot of vegetable Is just in a different way from I guess from the English people but we do eat a lot of vegetables. And we a lot of fruits Without realizing it.

Interviewer: We do. I mean, mango season. Take for instance.

Response: yeah, i love mango and i it. i also love cashew, i don't know if it exists here.

Interviewer: We do have healthy foods

Response: Yes we do. its just that it's really hard to find, the ones that make it here is the ones we see is really, really hard to find it and yeah but if I just believe if we can be shown in a way that our food can healthy as other main meal, i think we will be fine. I think we'll be fine. i Honestly think we'll be fine. Because since I've been eating my cauliflower with my yellow Gari I've really enjoyed so So I'm very sure there's a way that we can eat what we normally eat and enjoy it and we dont have to worry

Interviewer: would you like to say anything else?

Response: This is really interesting. I actually am happy that somebody is willing to hear our own points of view, instead of imposing. Thoughts on us, to let us speak freely from our hearts. Instead of saying, oh, You know like when you get multi choice questions choose A, B, or C. Is different from when you are actually speaking from your experience and from your mind. So I'm grateful somebody somewhere think it's okay for us to speak by experience and hopefully we'll get a change for me.