

Strengthening maternal nutrition assessment and care

Monthly technical E-dialogue series

Concept Note

Indian women continue to enter pregnancy with one or more nutritional risks - one in ten too short (height <145 cm) or too young (<20 years) or too thin (body mass index, BMI <16 kg/m²) or obesity (BMI ≥25 kg/m²). A large proportion continues to suffer from anemia (50%).

Strengthening nutrition assessment and services for positive pregnancy outcomes has been re-emphasized in the World Health Organization ANC guidelines 2016, wherein of the 49 recommended antenatal care (ANC) interventions, 14 were related to nutrition.

In India, efforts to strengthen maternal nutrition services, gained further momentum in 2018 with the launch of the POSHAN Abhiyaan/Nutrition Mission. One of the targets of the National Nutrition Mission is to reduce low birth weight by 2 per cent per annum.

Broadly, India has a minimum universal nutrition services package in antenatal care. However, ensuring universal and equitable coverage of interventions remains a challenge as also contextualization of the nutrition service package for at nutritional risk - mothers suffering from obesity, severe thinness, with or without depression or anemia, at the facility level and community.

SAARC 2020 guidance on maternal nutrition and International Federation of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (FIGO), Pregnancy and Obesity Nutrition Initiative (PONI) gives due emphasizes on nutrition assessment and services by Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and health works in Antenatal Care. They also bring out new evidence, job aids which can serve as boosters for professionals and health workers in the field.

There have been randomized control trials as well as programme effectiveness trials to test the feasibility and do ability of adopting an approach to deliver a comprehensive package of interventions.

The level of awareness on interventions, strategies and innovations is varied among professional nutritionists and gynaecologists. To ensure all are updated with latest knowledge and innovations, a series of technical webinars are proposed and anchored by national institute of nutrition with FIGO/FOGSI.

