



Muslim Khutbah Guide to Save the Lives of Mothers and Newborns

A Toolkit for Religious Leaders



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Acknowledgments

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The authors gratefully acknowledge the valuable assistance of Erika Pearl, Sherry Chastain and Kathy Erb for their contributions to this publication. Special thanks go to Franklin Baer for the use of sketches from the SANRU Program, Democratic Republic of Congo.

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This publication is made possible through support provided by the Maternal and Child Health Division, Office of Health, Infectious Diseases and Nutrition, Bureau for Global Health, U.S. Agency for International Development, under the terms of the Leader with Associates Cooperative Agreement GHS-A-00-04-00002-00. The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

May 2009

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Khutbah Guide for Muslim Religious Leaders

Allah's Precious Gifts: How You Can Support Healthy Mothers and Babies

"In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the most Merciful"

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds!

The compassionate, the merciful!

King on the day of reckoning!

Thee only do we worship, and to Thee do we cry for help.

Guide Thou us on the straight path,

The path of those to whom Thou hast been gracious;

With whom Thou art not angry, and who go not away. (SURA 1 MECCA)

New life is one of Allah's most precious gifts. Having a baby should be one of the happiest times for a woman and her family. Unfortunately, for many women it can be the most dangerous time of their lives. More than half a million women die each year during childbirth. In Africa, childbirth is so dangerous that when women become pregnant many of them tell their families they are going on a long journey and do not know if they will return.

The good news is that most of these deaths are preventable, and there is much we can do to save the lives of women and their babies. As a religious leader, you can play an important role in saving the lives of women and babies by educating families about how to protect themselves.

Dr. Mahmoud Fathalla, former Dean of the Medical School of Assuit University in Cairo, Egypt, described the situation by saying "Women are not dying because of diseases we cannot treat... . They are dying because societies have yet to make the decision that their lives are worth saving."

You may find Dr. Fathalla's statement disturbing. One might claim that no one would knowingly allow one's wife, sister, mother or daughter to die. However, if, as educated leaders we have lifesaving information, and we do not share it and help convince people to change harmful habits and traditions, then we are in a way allowing mothers and babies to die. This indifference goes against the word of Allah. The Prophet Muhammad said, *"The best among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most benevolent and most caring to his family."* (Tirmiji 3830)

You can play an important role in teaching your congregation how to care for mothers and the babies they carry. You can help families protect their health by giving them information to make the right choices. Each mother and child is a gift from Allah. We can and must work together to stop preventable maternal and newborn deaths.

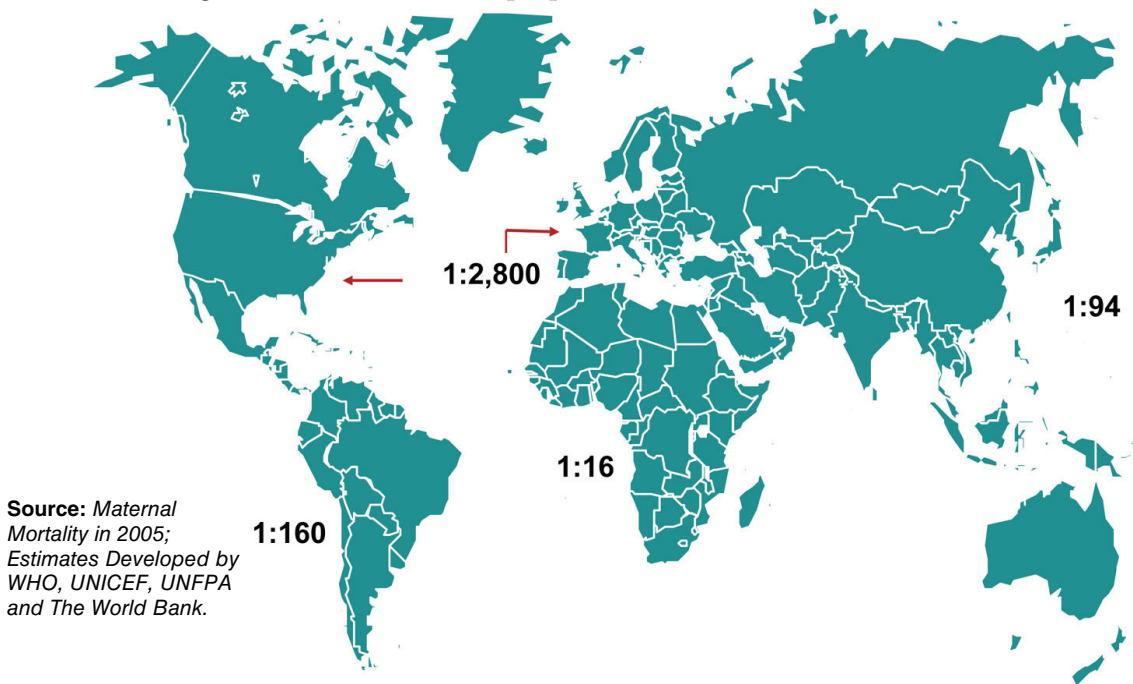
The Problem: Mothers Are Dying from Preventable Causes

Every minute of every day, somewhere in the world, a woman dies as a result of complications during pregnancy and childbirth. As mentioned earlier, each year, more than half a million women die of pregnancy-related causes and another 20 million suffer serious and long-lasting illnesses or

disabilities. Of the 130 million babies born every year, about four million die in the first four weeks of life. Especially alarming is that the majority of these deaths are preventable.

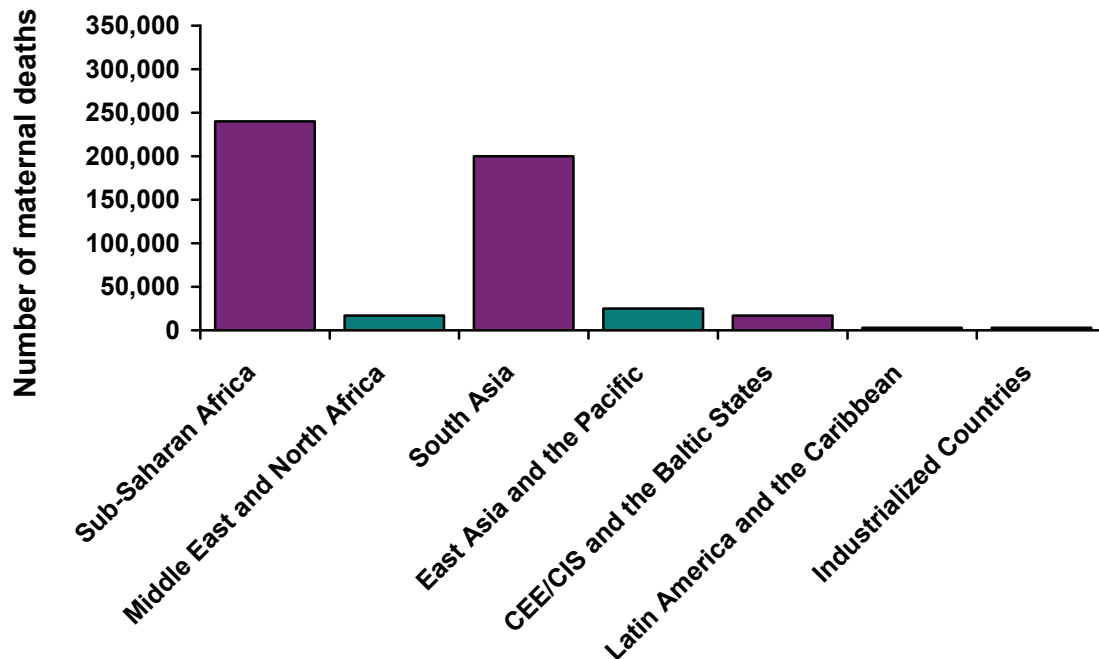
Where in the World Do Mothers Die More Frequently?

Mothers die as a result of pregnancy and childbirth complications much more frequently in the developing world, especially in Africa. The fact that much of the world has a lower rate of death for mothers, and that we know what is causing these deaths, is evidence that the number of deaths can be reduced through care in the home and proper health care.



The map above shows a woman's chance of dying of a pregnancy-related cause in various parts of the world. In sub-Saharan Africa, the chance of a woman dying as a result of pregnancy is 1 in 16, which is 175 times greater than in the United States.

Number of Maternal Deaths Each Year

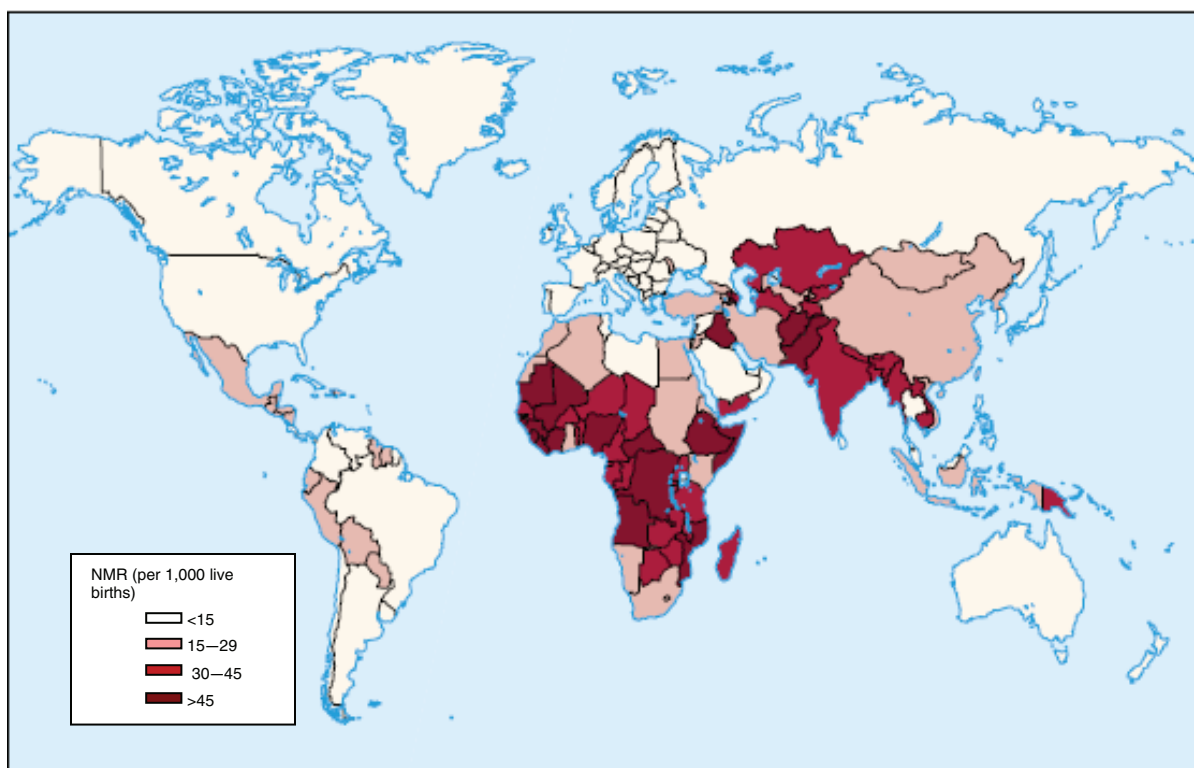


Babies Are Dying of Preventable Causes

Four million newborns die every year, with a large portion of these deaths due to preventable causes, including infections that could be treated with medicines. Many other babies die because their mothers have not received proper nutrition and health care during pregnancy.

Where Are Babies Dying More Frequently?

About half of the four million newborn deaths each year occur in Africa. The map on the following page shows the number of newborn deaths per 1,000 live births across the globe. There is a large difference between the number of babies who die each year in much of Africa and the number who die in other nations. As with preventable maternal deaths, there is much we can do to reduce newborn deaths in Africa.



How You Can Help: Educating Your Congregation and Community on Safe Motherhood Messages

Women and children often suffer and die because they do not have access to basic health care services or do not seek them even when they are available. This is where religious leaders can help! You can educate your congregation and community about the importance of health care for women during pregnancy and care for the mother and baby in the period just after birth.

This guide will help you understand the dangers faced by mothers and babies and learn what *you* can do as a religious leader to help save lives. It includes descriptions of problems encountered by mothers, solutions for those problems and sermon starters to help you educate your congregation on safe motherhood practices.

Khutbah 1: Safe Delivery of Allah's Gift

Message: The Importance of Regular (at least four) Visits to a Health Care Worker during Pregnancy and Delivery with a Skilled Birth Attendant

Although pregnancy and childbirth are a beautiful and natural part of life, there are many possible complications that can arise and threaten the life of the mother and baby. About eight in 10 maternal deaths are the direct result of complications during pregnancy, during delivery or within 42 days of delivery.

Causes of Death and Injury for the Mother

Listed below are the five main causes of a mother's death, including excessive bleeding, infection, eclampsia (also known as convulsions), labor that lasts much longer than normal and complications of unsafe abortions or incorrect treatment.

Excessive bleeding (hemorrhage): Blood loss during labor can very rapidly lead to death without prompt and appropriate life-saving care such as medicines to control bleeding, massage of the uterus to stimulate contractions or blood transfusion.

Sepsis (resulting from infections): Sepsis, which accounts for 15% of maternal deaths, is often the result of poor hygiene during delivery or untreated sexually transmitted diseases. Infections can be prevented by proper hygiene practices during delivery and detection and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases during pregnancy.

Eclampsia (convulsions): Eclampsia is the cause of approximately 12% of maternal deaths and is a hypertensive (high blood pressure) disorder. These deaths can be prevented through careful monitoring during pregnancy and treatment with anticonvulsant drugs such as magnesium sulfate.

Prolonged labor: Labor that lasts much longer than normal accounts for about 8% of maternal deaths, and can occur when the baby's head cannot pass through the mother's pelvis or when the baby is in the wrong position to pass through the birth canal. When mothers are unusually small, either from a poor diet or because they are very young and not yet fully grown, they are at an increased risk for prolonged labor.

Unsafe abortions: Complications of unsafe abortions are responsible for 13% of maternal deaths. These deaths can be prevented if women have access to family planning information and services, and proper health care for abortion-related complications.

Causes of Death for the Baby

The four major causes of newborn death worldwide, along with the percentages, are:

Infections (36%): Sepsis/pneumonia (26%), tetanus (7%) and diarrhea (3%).

Pre-term birth (babies born too early)/low birth weight (28%): Most pregnancies last around 40 weeks. Babies born before 37 weeks are called premature. These babies are often small and sick because their organs and systems are not fully developed.

Asphyxia (23%): Birth asphyxia occurs when a baby does not receive enough oxygen before, during or just after birth. There are many reasons that birth asphyxia may occur.

Birth defects, also known as congenital abnormalities (14%): The causes of most birth defects are unknown, but some are preventable.

What Can We Do?

Safe Motherhood Message: Regular Pregnancy Health Care Visits

Encouraging women to have regular health care visits during pregnancy can dramatically reduce the number of maternal and newborn deaths. As soon as a woman thinks she is pregnant, she should see a health care professional to get a checkup and learn how to protect her health. She should have at least four health care visits during her pregnancy to prevent problems, such as anemia and malaria, and to identify and treat conditions, including high blood pressure and infections, which can lead to the main causes of death.



HIV Counseling and Testing: Health care professionals recommend that all women be tested for HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) during pregnancy. You should explain that HIV counseling and testing is confidential and private. A woman has the right not to be tested if she chooses; however, not being tested puts her unborn child at unnecessary risk. In your discussions with women and their families, you can explain that the virus is transmitted through unprotected sex (intercourse without a condom) and reusing needles, and can also be transmitted to the unborn child during childbirth. However, there are simple things that a woman can do to avoid transmitting the virus to her child if she is aware before birth of her status. You should refer families to get further counseling from a health care professional.

Safe Motherhood Message: Birth at a Health Care Facility or with a Skilled Birth Attendant

(Doctor or Midwife): Women should deliver their babies at a health care facility that is equipped to handle the delivery of babies or they should deliver with the help of a skilled birth attendant if they give birth at home. A skilled attendant is an accredited health professional, such as a midwife, doctor or nurse, who has been educated and trained in the skills needed to manage normal (uncomplicated) pregnancies, childbirth and the immediate postnatal period, and in the identification, management and referral of complications in women and newborns. A health care worker trained to deliver babies can help manage complications such as excessive bleeding and prolonged labor during delivery and other emergencies that families are not likely to be able to manage on their own. Access to medications and properly sterilized instruments and equipment is crucial.

A skilled attendant trained to deliver babies can help prevent and manage complications such as prolonged labor or excessive bleeding during and after delivery. She or he also has access to crucial medications and properly sterilized instruments and equipment. The skilled attendant is trained to handle emergencies that families are not likely to be able to manage on their own.

Communicating with Your Congregation

The following sermon starter provides an example of how you can address safe motherhood messages in your sermons.

Scripture Used in Sermon

Narrated Abu Said: A woman came to Allah's Apostle and said, "O Allah's Apostle! Men (only) benefit by your teachings, so please devote to us from (some of) your time, a day on which we may come to you so that you may teach us of what Allah has taught you." Allah's Apostle said, "Gather on such-and-such a day at such-and-such a place." They gathered and Allah's Apostle came to them and taught them of what Allah had taught him. (Bukhari Volume 9, Book 92, Number 413)

"And if they carry, then spend on them until they deliver their burden..." (Quran 65:6–7)

"We have enjoined man to show kindness to his parents. With much pain his mother bears him, and with much pain she brings him into the world..." (Quran 46:15)

"The most perfect of believers in the matter of faith is he whose behavior is best; and the best of you are those who behave best towards their wives." (Hadith; Ibn-Hanbal, 7396)

Suggestions for Sermon: Safe Delivery of Allah's Gift

A child born to us is one of Allah's most precious gifts. Does this gift come easily and without hardship? No, sadly, pregnancy and childbirth can be the most dangerous times of a woman's life. Each year many women die or are injured as a result of pregnancy or childbirth. We must be careful to ensure that these special gifts are delivered to us safely.

There are steps we can take to make the delivery of our children safer. Allah has given us the resources to make helpful medicines and granted His children the skills and drive to become healers. Allah is our ultimate healer and protector. However, we must remember that He uses people and tools to do His good work. He has provided us with plants to make medicines. He has given His children the skills and desire to become knowledgeable and educated caregivers. In His wisdom, He has enabled us to build facilities where these precious children can be born in a clean and safe environment.

Allah expects us to embrace learning and value wisdom in others. We have examples from scripture of the value of education and learning for both men and women. Bukhari Volume 9 tells us, *"A woman came to Allah's Apostle and said, 'O Allah's Apostle! Men (only) benefit by your teachings, so please devote to us from (some of) your time, a day on which we may come to you so that you may teach us of what Allah has taught you.' Allah's Apostle said, 'Gather on such-and-such a day at such-and-such a place.' They gathered and Allah's Apostle came to them and taught them of what Allah had taught him."* (Bukhari Volume 9, Book 92, Number 413)

How do we make use of this drive for learning and intelligence bestowed on mankind by Allah? One of our first steps is for the expectant mother to visit a health care facility as early as possible to make sure that she and her baby are doing well. We should seek the advice and knowledge of people

trained and experienced in caring for expectant mothers and in delivering babies. They can tell us about the signs (what to look for) that mean we should seek care immediately.

When it is time for the baby to be born, we should plan for the expectant mother to deliver at a health center or at home with experienced birth attendants. We should value the skills and education of these health care professionals during this challenging time of pregnancy and childbirth.

The Quran mentions the care and attention required during pregnancy and childbirth. We read the words of Allah, *“And if they carry, then spend on them until they deliver their burden...”* (Quran 65:6-7) The family must devote a portion of their resources for a safe pregnancy. The Quran also mentions the difficulty of childbirth. *“We have enjoined man to show kindness to his parents. With much pain his mother bears him, and with much pain she brings him into the world...”* (Quran 46:15) Childbirth is a difficult task that must be approached seriously and carefully.

The proper use of resources during pregnancy is seeking the knowledge and services of trained health care professionals. Women should have at least four health care visits during her pregnancy so that the health care worker can identify problems that may require care. During these health visits, the woman will receive medicines to protect her and the baby, especially from malaria. Pregnant women have a much greater risk of getting severe malaria or malaria-related anemia, both of which can cause maternal death, spontaneous abortion and death of the newborn infant.

This responsibility to seek health care is shared by both the woman and her husband. Allah ordered husbands to take care of their wives in all situations. The Prophet tells us, *“The most perfect of believers in the matter of faith is he whose behavior is best; and the best of you are those who behave best towards their wives.”* (Hadith; Ibn-Hanbal, 7396) Pregnancy and childbirth are especially important times of responsibility for the husband when your treatment of your wife is tested. Allah expects great things of His children and the bringing of a child into the world is a time when you can live up to His expectations and do what is right.

As Allah created the earth, He blessed us with people who have the drive and intelligence to become healers. He populated the earth with plants that can be used to make medicines to heal us. Let us not reject these gifts but embrace them and use them to protect our precious families. Let us rejoice in our families and be grateful for the children Allah has sent to us.

Khutbah 2: Nurturing the Gift

Message: The Importance of Nutrition, Vitamins and Tetanus Vaccine during Pregnancy to Promote the Healthy Growth of Unborn Babies

Pregnancy and childbirth are very taxing on a woman's body. A malnourished woman faces greater risks of complications during pregnancy and delivery. She is more likely to suffer prolonged labor, which can result in death for her or her baby. (See Appendix I on Major Causes of Death and Injury for Mothers and Their Babies.)

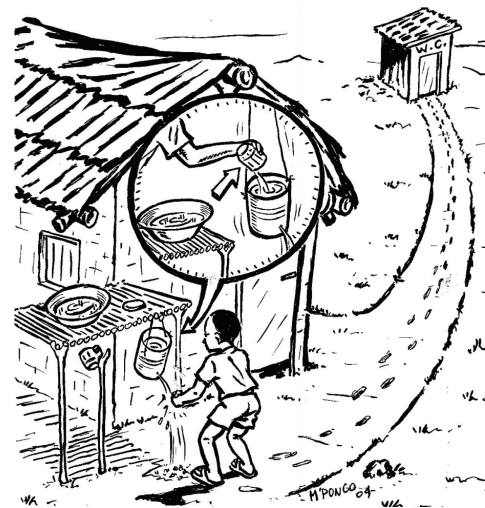
A baby born to a woman who has not received enough of a vitamin called folate before and during pregnancy is at an increased risk of major defects of the brain and spine. To prevent these defects, a woman must take enough folate before conception and in the first six weeks of pregnancy. Iron and folate are also important during the pregnancy to reduce anemia. Women who do not get enough vitamin A in pregnancy are more vulnerable to miscarriage and even death.

To help ensure a healthy pregnancy, a woman should get proper nutrition and take a supplement of iron and folate as prescribed by a health care worker. Women should also eat a balanced diet consisting of protein, fruits, vegetables and dairy products. Women should be eating as much as their husbands during this time of increased nutritional demands on their bodies. Expectant mothers should be eating three meals and two snacks every day. *(See Appendix II on Nutrition in Pregnancy for Healthy Moms and Babies.)*

Infections in newborns are the main cause of death and the easiest to prevent and treat. Although tetanus is one of the easiest conditions to prevent, it still kills tens of thousand of babies in Africa each year. In countries that have higher newborn mortality rates, around half of these deaths are due to infections, including tetanus. Fortunately, these deaths are very easily prevented when women receive tetanus toxoid vaccinations during their pregnancy.

Cleanliness and good hygiene are also important in protecting against infection. Proper handwashing with soap after using the toilet and before eating, drinking and preparing food can help reduce the spread of many diseases. Safe water should be used for drinking to avoid infections and diarrhea.

A pregnant woman also needs additional rest. In early pregnancy, the woman will feel tired as her body becomes accustomed to being pregnant. In the later stages of pregnancy, the growing baby uses more of the woman's energy and causes greater strains on her body. You can communicate to your congregation the importance of rest and that the mother may need to reduce her workload during pregnancy because her body is doing the important work of growing a baby.



In summary, here are four simple things that a family and community can do to support a pregnant woman and help her nurture and protect the unborn child:

- Encourage the mother to eat regularly (at least three meals per day) and to eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains and foods high in protein such as meat, milk and nuts, as explained in Appendix II.
- Help ensure that the pregnant woman gets tetanus toxoid vaccinations from a health care provider.

- Encourage the pregnant woman to take extra rest during the day.
- Recommend that all family members wash their hands regularly with soap.

Scripture Used in Sermon

“He created cattle, which provide you clothing, food, and other benefits.” (Quran 16:5)

“It is He who sends down water from the sky with which He brings up corn, olives, dates and grapes and other fruit.” (Quran 16:11)

“It is He who subdued the seas, from which you eat fresh fish.” (Quran 16:14)

“In cattle too, you have a worthy lesson. We give you to drink of that which is in their bellies, between the chyle and the blood: pure milk, a pleasant beverage for those who drink it.” (Quran 16:66)

“Eat these fruits when they are ripe.” (Quran 16:141)

“...and from it [the earth], we produced grain for their sustenance.” (Quran 36:33)

“And if they carry, then spend on them until they deliver their burden; and if they suckle your offspring, give them their recompense.” (Quran 65:6–7)

“The father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother’s food and clothing on a reasonable basis. No person shall have a burden laid on him greater than he can bear...” (Quran 2:233)

Suggestions for Sermon: Nurturing the Gift

As humans, we are among Allah’s most amazing creations. With our minds and bodies we can do wonderful things. We may have talents in music, art or storytelling or we may be skilled craftsmen or farmers. We are all different, and some of us have strengths or weaknesses that others may not have. However, we all need to nourish and protect our bodies.

One of the most remarkable feats we can accomplish is to produce a child. However, this gift comes with responsibility. We have a responsibility to see that the mother and growing baby get the nourishment they need. Pregnant or breastfeeding mothers require a healthy balanced diet and more rest than usual. When a woman is pregnant, her body needs additional food to help her baby grow and to keep the woman strong. Eating a variety of nutritious foods will not make the baby too fat or make the delivery difficult. On the contrary, it will help the mother to be strong for childbirth.

Women who do not eat enough foods rich in iron such as meat or liver may suffer from anemia. Anemia is dangerous during pregnancy and can put a woman at risk for excessive bleeding after delivery. Without good food to keep them strong and healthy, pregnant women have a difficult time during delivery. Their babies are often born very small and sick.

As the Quran notes, a healthy diet is a mixture of different types of food that Allah has graciously provided for His creation to satisfy all the needs of the body. We read about Allah's creation in the Quran:

"He created cattle, which provide you clothing, food, and other benefits." (Quran 16:5)

"It is He who sends down water from the sky with which He brings up corn, olives, dates and grapes and other fruit." (Quran 16:11)

"It is He who subdued the seas, from which you eat fresh fish." (Quran 16:14)

"In cattle too, you have a worthy lesson. We give you to drink of that which is in their bellies, between the chyle and the blood: pure milk, a pleasant beverage for those who drink it." (Quran 16:66)

"Eat these fruits when they are ripe." (Quran 16:141)

"...and from it [the earth], we produced grain for their sustenance." (Quran 36:33)

As you see, Allah has provided for us. It is up to you, fathers, to take an active role in seeing that the mother of your child is getting the nourishment she needs during pregnancy to give birth to a strong baby. In the Quran, Allah tells us, *"And if they carry, then spend on them until they deliver their burden; and if they suckle your offspring, give them their recompense."* (Quran 65:6–7)

If the extra expense of this food requires that we work harder or spend less on other things, then Allah requires that we do this. We should work to find a way to invest our resources to ensure a healthy baby. Perhaps we can work together as a community to see that our expectant mothers are getting proper meals.

In addition to a healthy diet, women need extra rest during pregnancy. Reducing a pregnant woman's workload helps her to get more rest and keeps her healthier for delivery.

The life of the baby in a woman's body depends on her health. It is essential for husbands to provide their wives a variety of healthy foods, as well as the opportunity to rest during pregnancy. If the men in the family smoke, they should refrain from smoking in her presence since the smoke affects the baby when the mother breathes it.

To make sure the expectant mother is getting important vitamins she needs, she can take a supplement as recommended by trained health care personnel. Doctors know that iron folate can help prevent major defects of the baby's brain and spine. A mother can take a supplement during her pregnancy to make sure she is getting enough of this important vitamin.

We also have a responsibility to protect our babies from harmful illnesses, such as tetanus, resulting from infection. Fortunately, we have a vaccine called tetanus toxoid that can protect mother and baby from this serious illness. All adults should be vaccinated. If a woman who is expecting a baby

has not had the vaccine, she should get it to protect her newborn child from contracting the infection at birth.

This remarkable ability we have to bring a child into the world should not be taken lightly. Yes, it is a joyous and proud occasion, but there are important responsibilities we must not ignore. The father must have an important role in providing for his pregnant wife and child. As we read in the Quran, *“The father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother’s food and clothing on a reasonable basis. No person shall have a burden laid on him greater than he can bear...”* (Quran 2:233)

Eating a balanced diet, along with receiving vitamins and vaccines that are recommended by health care workers, will help protect the mother and the baby she carries.

Let us rejoice in our children and glorify Allah as we strive to protect these precious gifts that have been entrusted to us. Let us respect our bodies and our children, and give our babies the greatest opportunity for good health.

Khutbah 3: Shielding the Gift

Message: Sleep Under an Insecticide-Treated Bed Net to Avoid Malaria in Pregnancy

Take at Least Two Doses of Malaria Medicine or as Recommended by the Doctor/Midwife or Health Care Worker

Malaria is the number one killer in Africa. It is especially dangerous to a pregnant woman, her growing baby and children under five years old. Expectant mothers are particularly vulnerable to this illness because pregnancy reduces a woman’s defenses to the disease. A baby may not develop properly because of malarial infection in the mother. Malaria is also responsible for many of the premature births and low birth weight in babies who are born in Africa.

Babies who are born prematurely (born before 37 weeks of gestation), and babies who weigh less than normal when born, account for 24% of newborn deaths in Africa. Premature babies are vulnerable to breathing difficulties, bleeding and jaundice, among other complications. They have a risk of death that is approximately 13 times higher than full-term and normal weight babies.

Expectant mothers are particularly vulnerable to malaria because pregnancy reduces a woman’s defenses to the disease. Fortunately, we can dramatically reduce the cases of malaria by encouraging women to sleep under an insecticide-treated bed net. In addition, we have medicine, known as sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine (SP), which can protect a woman from malaria. These two strategies—using bed nets treated with an insecticide and malaria prevention medicine—can help protect a pregnant woman from this dangerous illness.

Sharing these strategies with your congregation will help give them the armor they need to protect the new mothers and babies in their families.

Scripture Used in Sermon

“Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. After a difficulty Allah will soon grant relief.” (Quran 7:65)

“For Muslim men and women for believing men and women for devout men and women for true men and women for men and women who are patient and constant for men and women who humble themselves for men and women who give in charity for men and women who fast (and deny themselves) for men and women who guard their chastity and for men and women who engage much in Allah’s praise for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward.” (Quran 33:35)

Suggestions for Sermon: Shielding the Gift

What is Allah’s will for us? Does He leave His children unprotected? We may go through difficult times and pain. We may have enemies who want to do us harm. We may face many temptations in our lives that can lead us to immorality.

But Allah is with us and grants us relief. As the Quran tells us, *“Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. After a difficulty Allah will soon grant relief.”* (Quran 7:65)

Protection against Disease

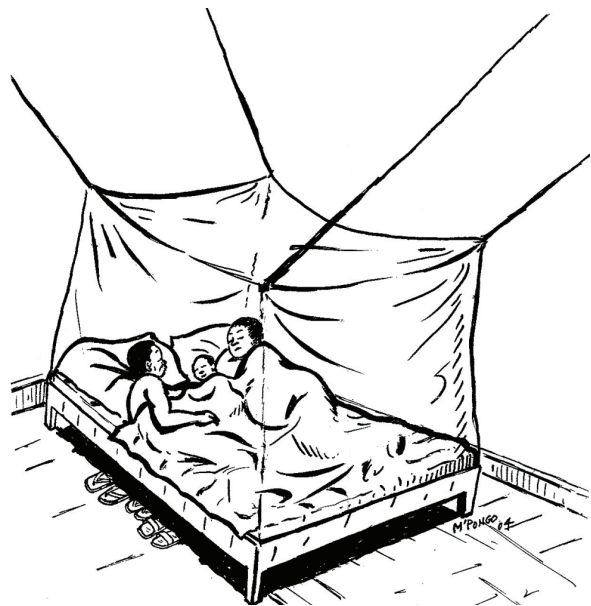
Just as Allah grants His children relief, we must guard them from undue burdens and harmful diseases as they develop in their mothers’ wombs.

Fortunately, we have methods to defend expectant mothers and their babies against diseases. A very dangerous illness we must be vigilant about is malaria. Malaria is carried by mosquitoes and passed on to us when we are bitten by them. Expectant mothers are particularly vulnerable to this illness because pregnancy reduces a woman’s defenses to the disease, which is very dangerous for her developing baby. A mother suffering from malaria may experience miscarriage or stillbirth, or give birth to a premature or underweight baby.

The merciful Allah has provided us with the tools to provide protection against threats. We have resources to build a shield for our developing children against the disease of malaria, primarily medicine and bed nets.

Medicine: Sulphadoxine-Pyrimethamine

Allah has given us the ability to create helpful medicines to fight malaria. Doctors, midwives and health care workers have a medicine called sulphadoxine-pyrimethamine, or SP, to help prevent malaria during a woman’s pregnancy. Taking this medicine provided by a trained health care professional will guard our babies against diseases such as malaria.



Insecticide-Treated Bed Nets

An important shield against malaria is an insecticide-treated bed net. Sleeping under a net treated with a substance to deter mosquitoes will help the mother and baby avoid the bites of this disease-carrying insect. If we dramatically reduce our exposure to the bites of mosquitoes, we greatly decrease our risk of contracting malaria. Let us strive to guard ourselves and our developing children from this dangerous illness.

Protecting Our Blessings

The Quran reminds us to be devout and vigilant. Allah says: *“For Muslim men and women for believing men and women for devout men and women for true men and women for men and women who are patient and constant for men and women who humble themselves for men and women who give in charity for men and women who fast (and deny themselves) for men and women who guard their chastity and for men and women who engage much in Allah’s praise for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward.”* (Quran 33:35)

We must not become complacent and take our blessings, such as home and family, for granted. When we do, we may become vulnerable to temptations or let down our guard. Just as Allah has given us guidance on how to achieve forgiveness and great reward, He has provided us with physical shields to protect ourselves against disease. Let us remember the joy of family and children, and remain vigilant and protective of these blessings.

Taking medicine recommended by health care workers to prevent malaria and sleeping under insecticide-treated nets to prevent mosquito bites will guard our physical bodies against harmful disease. Allah has provided us with protection to help us remain physically and spiritually healthy. It is our duty to serve Him faithfully.

Khutbah 4: Preparing to Receive the Gift

Message: Birth Preparedness: Plans for Birth and Emergency Transport

Many things can go wrong during the birth of a baby, turning what should be a joyous event into a tragedy. Every woman and newborn is at risk of developing a complication, and most of these cannot be predicted. Even strong women who have given birth easily to other children are at risk. Preparing for the birth and possible complications can help avoid tragedy and save the life of the mother and baby. *(See Appendix I on the Major Causes of Death and Injury for Mothers and Their Babies.)*

You should encourage the mother and her family to work with a skilled health care provider to develop a birth plan that includes all the arrangements for a normal birth and a plan for how to identify and handle complications. *(Appendix III includes a checklist, which families can use to ensure they are prepared for the birth and possible complications.)*

Plan for Normal Birth

The plan should include where the woman will deliver the baby, which trained skilled birth attendant will help her with the delivery and how she will get to the facility when it is time. Family and community members should assist the woman in having funds available when needed to pay for care during a normal birth. For example, the family can put aside a small amount on a weekly basis.

The family will also want to make arrangements for someone to stay with the mother during labor and childbirth and someone to care for her house and children during her absence.

Prepare for Complications

The family should assist the woman in choosing emergency transportation to an appropriate health care facility in case danger signs appear. They should also discuss emergency funds that may be available through the community and/or health care facility if danger signs arise and emergency care is needed. An appropriate blood donor who would be available in case of emergency must be identified.

Although there are many potential problems that may arise during pregnancy and childbirth, complications can be better managed with preparation. Your role as a religious leader is to encourage the family to be prepared physically and spiritually for the birth of the child.

Scripture Used in Sermon

“Let the rich man spend according to his means, and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him. Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. Allah will grant after hardship, ease.” (Quran 65:7)

“The most perfect of believers in the matter of faith is he whose behavior is best; and the best of you are those who behave best towards their wives.” (Hadith; Ibn-Hanbal, 7396)

“...and one of Allah’s signs is, that He has created for you mates from yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and has ordained between you Love and Mercy.” (Quran 30:21)

Suggestions for Sermon: Preparing to Receive the Gift

Those of you expecting a baby are going to face an extraordinary event for which you must plan. The birth of a child requires much planning and preparation. One of the most important things you can do to start planning and preparing for the child is to have the woman see a health care professional. A woman should see a health care professional at least four times during her pregnancy.

During pregnancy health care visits, the health provider should help the mother and her family develop a plan for a safe delivery. If at all possible, it is advised that the mother give birth at a health care facility with the assistance of a skilled attendant, such as a trained midwife, doctor or nurse. If she must have the baby at home, she should still have a skilled attendant deliver the baby. Families should save money for transportation in case the woman needs to go to a hospital because of

complications during delivery. In Islam, it is obligatory for husbands to save and be prepared for pregnancy and childbirth.

The Quran tells us, *“Let the rich man spend according to his means, and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him. Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. Allah will grant after hardship, ease.”* (Quran 65:7) Allah expects a man to use his resources to protect the life of his wife and child.

Childbirth can be dangerous for a woman, especially if she and her family are not prepared. Women may experience severe bleeding, infection and complications from high blood pressure or obstructions during labor. A trained health care worker can look for signs that there may be problems during labor.

Family members and others in the household should know the signs of labor and be ready to react when the expectant mother goes into labor. They should develop a birth plan that includes arrangements for emergency transportation to a hospital if it becomes necessary. If a particular car is to be used, where will that car be kept and how can it be made accessible at all times? The father’s active involvement in arranging for the birth and developing a plan to prepare for emergencies demonstrates his commitment to his family in accordance with Allah’s word.

The Prophet said, *“The most perfect of believers in the matter of faith is he whose behavior is best; and the best of you are those who behave best towards their wives.”* (Hadith; Ibn-Hanbal, 7396)

A husband and wife form the nucleus of a family. Their relationship is described in the Quran as having two major qualities: love (passion, friendship and companionship) and mercy (understanding, reconciliation, tolerance and forgiveness) within the overall objective of tranquility. The Quran explains what this means, *“...and one of Allah’s signs is, that He has created for you mates from yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and has ordained between you Love and Mercy.”* (Quran 30:21) The husband is expected to show mercy on his wife and provide for her needs.

To achieve tranquility, we want to minimize the unexpected whenever we can. That is especially important at a time like childbirth where many things can go wrong. To reduce the unexpected, we must know what to expect and plan accordingly. Preparedness does not reflect a lack of faith in Allah. When we are faced with a difficult challenge in life, we must do what we can to prepare for it. Yes, it is true that Allah will be with us and we must rely on the power of prayer, but we must also take action to ready ourselves.

There are steps we can take to prepare for the birth of a child, such as developing a plan for the birth and arranging for emergency transportation. We pray that there will be no emergencies, but we are warned that things can and do go wrong in childbirth and we are wise to be ready for them. The gift of a child is a wonderful blessing. Let us be grateful to Allah for the opportunity to bring new life into this world and meet our responsibilities and prepare to receive this gift.

Khutbah 5: To Be Wise and Watchful

Message: Danger Signs in Pregnancy: Bleeding, Swelling, High Blood Pressure, Anemia

Complications can happen at any point during pregnancy. Although such complications may arise quickly, the family will often see some danger signs to warn them of these problems.

One of the most dangerous complications in pregnancy is eclampsia (or convulsions), which is a high blood pressure disorder. Eclampsia is the cause of approximately 12% of maternal deaths. Women with high blood pressure may experience headaches, fatigue or excessive swelling in the face, ankles and hands. A pregnant woman experiencing these symptoms should be taken to a health care facility for treatment.

Another potential problem in pregnancy is anemia, which is a low red blood cell count. Extreme fatigue is a symptom of anemia. Women who are anemic may not be able to withstand even the normal blood loss of childbirth.

A family should go to the nearest health care facility if the pregnant mother experiences any of the following danger signs:

- Vaginal bleeding
- Difficulty breathing
- Fever
- Severe abdominal pain
- Severe or persistent vomiting, or any vomiting accompanied by pain or fever
- Severe headache or any headache with blurred vision, slurred speech or numbness
- Swelling of the hands and face
- Convulsions/loss of consciousness
- Leaking of greenish/brownish fluid from vagina
- Foul-smelling fluid from vagina
- Decrease in or absence of movement of the baby
- Unusual fatigue
- Pain when urinating

Awareness of these danger signs and quick action can save the life of a mother and her baby. As you educate your congregation, you will be giving them the knowledge they need to help save a life.

Scripture Used in Sermon

“I am creating a human being from clay. Once I design him and blow into him from my spirit, you shall fall prostrate before him.” (Quran 38: 71–72)

“We created a pair of everything (male and female), that you may take heed.” (Quran 51:49)

Suggestions for Sermon: To Be Wise and Watchful

There are often warning signs when danger is coming. Some signs may be powerful and loud like thunder when a strong storm is brewing. Some may be quiet like the soft sounds a lion makes quietly stalking its prey. If we learn the meaning of warnings and remain watchful and alert, we are more likely to recognize the signs of impending danger.

An expectant mother often displays symptoms or experiences danger signs that something is wrong and may be threatening her health and her baby. She must be aware of what these signs are and seek help if she encounters them during pregnancy. The mother-to-be should be vigilant, always protecting her health. We must remember that her life is sacred, and the baby she will deliver is a blessing from Allah. The father and other members of the household must also learn these danger signs and know what to do if they encounter them.

Family members expecting a baby cannot watch for warning signs if they do not know what those signs are. We must seek out knowledge about symptoms of problems in pregnancy and accept the wise counsel of those who are trained in matters of health. Allah expects us to seek knowledge. In the Quran, we learn there are two facets to a human being—material and spiritual. You have to combine the two to make a whole. In the Quran 38:71 and 72, Allah says man has physical and metaphysical bodies and He told the angels that, *“I am creating a human being from clay. Once I design him and blow into him from my spirit, you shall fall prostrate before him.”* (Quran 38:71–72) This shows that man is a physical and spiritual being. Therefore, you cannot develop the body and leave the spirit.

When Allah speaks of mankind in the Quran, He speaks not only about men but also about women. Therefore, women should also seek knowledge because like the man, the woman too has the same components. So in the Islamic concept of education, we cannot develop the body of the woman and leave her spirituality. The glorious Quran repeatedly, and in many places, speaks extensively on the great achievement of some women, including their commitment to Islam and service to humanity.

A man and his wife are a team who must work together to keep their family safe. Even with the tyranny of the Pharaoh, his wife, because she was well educated, was able to withstand the humiliation and save herself from hell fire. This goes to show the place of a woman in our faith. Without her, there is a vacuum. That is also the reason why in the sex theory of the Quran 51:49, Allah made his creations as opposites, male and female. He said, *“we made everything in twos.”* Examples are: Up and Down, Hunger and Satisfaction, Long and Short, Ignorance and Knowledge, and Negative and Positive. This shows the necessity of the other sex, which is why a man and his wife must work as a team to understand their own health and learn the danger signs in pregnancy.

Allah has given us the ability to learn and study the earth and ourselves. He has blessed many among us with the talent and energy to become doctors, midwives, health care workers and scientists to help us live healthy and productive lives. These skilled attendants and health care workers have knowledge to teach us about how to take care of our bodies and recognize symptoms that something may be wrong when we are expecting a baby. The wise expectant mother and father will learn these symptoms and what to do about them.

Common danger signs in pregnancy include bleeding, swelling, excessive pain and fatigue. Any bleeding is a warning signal that something could be wrong and should be taken seriously. Headaches and convulsions can be caused by high blood pressure during pregnancy, a serious condition that can threaten the life of the mother. Women with high blood pressure may experience headaches, fatigue or excessive swelling in the face, ankles and hands. Fatigue is also caused by anemia, which is a low red blood cell count. An expectant mother should see a health care worker if she shows any of these danger signs.

Once we know these signs, we must remain watchful and vigilant. Allah expects us to use the mind and spirit He has given us and be knowledgeable and alert at all times. To protect the health of the mothers and babies in our families, we must know what those dangers are and recognize warning signs. But in order to do that, we must seek out learning and knowledge of the dangers we face. Only when we are educated and aware of threats to our health, are we prepared to stand guard over our own health and our growing baby.

First, accept that all of us are precious to Allah and should value our own health and the health of our families. Next we must learn the warning signs of bleeding, swelling and fatigue in expectant mothers. Finally, we must act on these warnings and seek help from a health care worker. Allah blesses us with minds and spirits to learn many things. We must use our minds and learn the danger signs threatening the mothers and babies in our families.

Khutbah 6: Accepting the Gift with Care

Message: Postnatal Care within 24 Hours, at Three and at Seven Days after Birth

The period just after birth can be very hazardous for a new mother and her baby. Four million newborns die each year in the first four weeks of life. They are vulnerable to infection and other illnesses and may not be getting the nutrients they need. More than two-thirds of newborn deaths occur by the end of the first week after delivery, and up to one-half of all newborn deaths occur in the first 24 hours. Approximately two-thirds of all maternal deaths occur in the postnatal period. In light of these dangers, postnatal health care visits are recommended within 24 hours, at three days and at seven days after birth.

The newborn will need much care, and should be kept warm and clean. If at all possible, the mother should give the baby only breast milk, and should not feed the baby water, porridge or any sort of potion. The mother may need assistance learning how to breastfeed correctly.

A woman is also vulnerable in the period just after childbirth and should be watched for danger signs. She is at risk for excessive blood loss and infection as her body heals. Both mother and baby should see a health care provider within three to seven days after birth to make sure that she and her baby are healthy.

It is also important for the woman and her family to be aware of danger signs that may require additional medical attention such as pain, fever and excessive bleeding. (See Appendix IV on Care for the New Mother and Baby after Birth.)

The knowledge you share with your congregation can help keep them and their new babies healthy, avoiding preventable tragedy.

Scripture Used in Sermon

“And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship and she brings him forth with hardship, and the bearing of him, and the weaning of him is thirty (30) months.” (Quran 46:15)

“The duty of feeding and clothing nursing mothers in a seemly manner is upon the father of the child.” (Quran 2:233)

“We enjoined man to show kindness to his parents, for with much pain his mother bears him and he is not weaned before he is two years of age.” (Quran 31:14)

“The best among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most benevolent and most caring to his family.” (Hadith; Tirmiji 3830)

Suggestions for Sermon: Accepting the Gift with Care

The birth of a child is a tremendous event in our lives. It is one of life’s greatest blessings and gifts from Allah. After receiving this gift, we have some important responsibilities we must fulfill. It is not simply enough to accept the gift and give thanks; we must care for the baby and mother during this vulnerable time. How we treat this gift is tremendously important. When we receive the blessing of a new baby, our attention to the health of the mother and child must be constant. We cannot turn away and return to our everyday lives.

The Quran tells us of the difficulty of childbirth. In the Quran 46:15, we read, *“And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship and she brings him forth with hardship, and the bearing of him, and the weaning of him is thirty (30) months.”*

Immediately following the birth, caring for the health of the mother and newborn is critical. The family should see a health care worker to ensure that the mother and baby are healthy and doing well. It is our duty when we are entrusted with this special gift of a new child.



Thanks to Allah's mercy, we have the ability to provide special care for a mother and baby in the vulnerable days immediately following the birth. Today we are able to offer our children much greater newborn care than we could in the past because of the work of many gifted scientists, doctors and midwives. We must seek out health care in the crucial period of three to seven days following birth.

The new mother needs special care after the birth of a child. Her body has been through an amazing and exhausting event. She is vulnerable to illness and complications from loss of blood or other dangers that occur after a baby is born. The mother should rest because of the potential for blood loss and give her body time to recover.

The baby has great nutritional needs and, if at all possible, should only be breastfed. The mother may need help breastfeeding the new baby. Modern scientific research has brought to light the importance of breastfeeding for the health of a child. Islam has known and emphasized this fact for some 1400 years. The Quran tells us that it is the responsibility of the father to make sure his wife is receiving what she needs in the vulnerable period after childbirth.

The verse from Al-Baqharah tells us, *"The duty of feeding and clothing nursing mothers in a seemly manner is upon the father of the child."* (Quran 2:233)

The verse from Luqman tells us, *"We enjoined man to show kindness to his parents, for with much pain his mother bears him and he is not weaned before he is two years of age."* (Quran 31:14)

Our children are capable of bringing us great joy. We must give them the best opportunity we can to grow and fulfill their potential. Each child is capable of becoming righteous and wise, but we have to provide a healthy start in life.



Parents can give their children a greater chance to grow and serve Allah as He intended if they receive proper health care in the first few days after birth. And we must remember the mother, the one who carried this special child in her womb. She also needs attention and proper health care. Men, you should see that your wives see a health worker in the first few days after birth. Your wife's body is as sacred as your own.

The Prophet said, *"The best among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most benevolent and most caring to his family."* (Hadith; Tirmiji 3830)

You can demonstrate this love and commitment to your wife by ensuring she receives what she needs to recover and be healthy.

Do not store this information away as advice that sounds good, but act on it when the time comes and give your new babies and mothers the best chance at a healthy and fulfilling life.

Khutbah 7: Worth the Wait

Message: Postpartum Family Planning to Protect the Lives of Mother and Baby: Wait at least two years after a birth before becoming pregnant again

The demands on a woman's body during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding are great. She needs adequate rest and nutrition during these challenging times. Taking care of children the mother already has is also taxing on her physically. Properly spacing the births of children can help give the woman time to recover and become strong again, and will enable her to properly care for an infant before she faces the demands of another pregnancy. Health care professionals recommend spacing pregnancies at least two years apart.

In order to space pregnancies properly, a woman and her husband will need to use appropriate family planning techniques. In your role as a religious leader, you can encourage them to seek advice on family planning from a health care professional.



Scripture Used in Sermon

“And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years, give thanks to Me and to your parents, unto Me is the final destination.” (Quran 31:14)

“And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship and she brings him forth with hardship, and the bearing of him, and the weaning of him is thirty (30) months.” (Quran 46:15)

“For Muslim men and women for believing men and women for devout men and women for true men and women for men and women who are patient and constant for men and women who humble themselves for men and women who give in charity for men and women who fast (and deny themselves) for men and women who guard their chastity and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward.” (Quran 33:35)

“The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months.” (Quran 46:15)

Suggestions for Sermon: Worth the Wait

Sometimes life catches us by surprise. Many times these surprises are a good thing. When a loved one gives us an unexpected gift or performs a kind deed, it makes us happy. A rainbow after a rainstorm may surprise and delight us. Beautiful flowers growing in a place we would not expect, like a patch of weeds, can bring us joy.

But some things in life are better when they are planned. Bringing children into the world is one of those times. Children are a precious gift from Allah, but we must be prepared for their arrival. It is especially important to plan the addition of a child to our family if we already have one or more children. If a woman becomes pregnant after she has just had a child, it can be dangerous to the health of the mother and the baby she carries.

In order to plan our families, we must exercise self-discipline and control. We should try to plan our families so that when we have a new baby, the next child is not born for at least another two years. Waiting to conceive another child gives the mother time for her body to recover. It also gives her time to properly nourish her first child and for the parents to concentrate on the health of that child.

Muslims are advised to organize their lives and their families by legitimate means that will guarantee that the wife, as well as the husband, has the health, strength and free time needed to properly care for the children. This helps to guarantee a stable, functioning and virtuous family life. The issue of child spacing is not new to Islam. There is even agreement among the four great judicial schools (Shafi'e, Maliki, Hanafi and Hanbali) concerning the practice of withdrawal (al'azl), which was nothing more than an authorized form of child spacing. Clearly Islam encourages prolonged breastfeeding up to two years, which is a means of protecting the well-being of the mother and her child.

The importance of breastfeeding is supported by the Quran 31:14, *"And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years give thanks to Me and to your parents, unto Me is the final destination."*

The Quran also tells us in 46:15, *"And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship and she brings him forth with hardship, and the bearing of him, and the weaning of him is thirty (30) months."*

In this stage where we wish to delay conceiving another child, we should use a form of family planning during marital relations to avoid pregnancy. This is where we must show discipline and exercise self-control.

Self-control is one of the virtues referred to in the Quran as critical to gaining Allah's praise and earning His forgiveness and reward. Allah says, *"For Muslim men and women for believing men and women for devout men and women for true men and women for men and women who are patient and constant for men and women who humble themselves for men and women who give in charity for men and women who fast (and deny themselves) for men and women who guard their*

chastity and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward." (Quran 33:35)

This verse explains that Islam is a total submission to Allah's Will, which includes all the virtues, such as those specified in this verse. The virtues referred to are: (1) Faith, hope and trust in Allah, and in His benevolent government of the world; (2) devotion and service in practical life; (3) love and practice of truth, in thought and intention, word and deed; (4) patience and constancy, in suffering and in right endeavor; (5) humility, the avoidance of an attitude of arrogance and superiority; (6) charity, i.e., help to the poor and unfortunate ones in life, a special virtue arising out of the general duty of service (No. 2); (7) self-control, typically in food, but generally in all appetites; (8) chastity, purity in sex life, purity in motive, thought, word and deed; and (9) constant attention to Allah's Message and cultivation of the desire to get nearer to Allah.

While it is true that Allah guides our lives, we are in control of our own actions. We have been given the opportunity to make choices and we must exercise good judgment and be in command of our actions. Children come into our lives by the goodness and mercy of Allah, but we can and must control the timing in order to keep our children and their mothers healthy. Doctors and other health workers have seen that having children very close in age can raise the risk of health problems for the mother and child.

Child spacing benefits the mother, the child, the father and the entire family. Pregnancy and breastfeeding place many demands on a woman's body. Child spacing allows time between births so that the mother can rest between pregnancies and maintain good health, be less tired and have more energy. She can give more attention to her children and husband, and help ensure good health for the family.

Remember what we read in the Quran about child spacing. A woman should try not to conceive a baby while she is still nursing a child. The Quran tells us, *"The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months."* (Quran 46:15)

Bringing a child into the world is a great responsibility, and we must not take it lightly. Although the birth of a child is one of Allah's greatest gifts, there can be serious health consequences for the mother and the child. One of the greatest gifts we can give to our children and families is good health. By demonstrating love, power over our situations and the self-discipline needed to safely space the births of our children, we are giving them and ourselves the greatest gift of all—a chance at a healthy life.

Khutbah 8: The Guardian

Message: The Man of the Family Should Take Responsibility for the Health of the Woman during Pregnancy, during Birth and after Birth, and of the Newborn Baby

The birth of a baby should be a joyous event for a family. However, as you have read throughout this guide, there is much that can go wrong during pregnancy and childbirth, and this happy occasion can quickly turn into tragedy.

Although there is a great deal a woman can do to protect herself and the health of her baby, she will need support to achieve these health-seeking behaviors. Ensuring the woman visits a health care provider as soon as she thinks she may be pregnant, and again throughout her pregnancy, should be one of the first priorities of the man of the family. In addition to checkups to look for any problems, there are vitamins such as iron and folate, and medicines to prevent malaria that the health care professional can provide.

The birth of the baby is an especially hazardous time. The mother should deliver the baby in a health care facility or at least with the help of a health care provider trained to deliver babies. The father should take responsibility to see that this is arranged ahead of time. *(See Appendix I on Major Causes of Death and Injury for Mothers and Their Babies.)*

Proper nutrition and rest are also crucial to the pregnant woman and her growing baby. *(See Appendix II on Nutrition in Pregnancy for Healthy Moms and Babies.)* You can convey to the father his role in seeing that the woman eats enough of the right foods and gets adequate rest. The woman may need to reduce her workload in order to achieve this.

A father must also be sure his family is prepared for the birth and has made appropriate plans. The father should be heavily involved in developing a plan for the birth and potential emergency complications. *(See Appendix III on Birth Preparedness.)*

The proper care of the new baby and of the recovering mother after the birth are critical to their health and survival. *(See Appendix IV on Care for the New Mother and Baby after Birth.)* The father has an important role to see that they receive the care they need. As a religious leader, you can provide valuable guidance to the men in your congregation and help them understand this role.

Scripture Used in Sermon

“The most perfect of believers in the matter of faith is he whose behavior is best; and the best of you are those who behave best towards their wives.” (Hadith; Ibn-Hanbal, 7396)

“The best among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most benevolent and most caring to his family.” (Hadith; Tirmiji 3830)

“...and one of Allah’s signs is, that He has created for you mates from yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and has ordained between you Love and Mercy” (Quran 30:21)

“The father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother’s food and clothing on a reasonable basis. No person shall have a burden laid on him greater than he can bear...” (Quran 2:233)

Suggestions for Sermon: The Guardian

What is the most important role of a man in his family? We do not need to look far to find the answer to this question. The Quran tells us what the man of the family must do. The father has been given the important role of guardian and protector of his family, and in this role he should be guided by love. Love for one another is one of Allah’s most precious gifts and should become stronger as we grow older.

As the Prophet said, *“The most perfect of believers in the matter of faith is he whose behavior is best; and the best of you are those who behave best towards their wives.”* (Hadith; Ibn-Hanbal, 7396)



One of the most critical times for a man to step up and fulfill his responsibility to his family is when a new baby is expected. The birth of a child is a wonderful blessing and a joyous time. However, pregnancy can be dangerous for the woman and there are many risks the new mother and baby face in the vulnerable period after birth. Fortunately, there is much we can do to help a woman have a healthy pregnancy and delivery, and this is where the man of the family can help the woman get the care she needs.

First, a woman should see a health care worker for at least four antenatal care visits starting early on in her pregnancy. The advice of the health care worker on proper nutrition, vitamins and avoiding health risks during pregnancy should be followed. As the pregnancy progresses, the family should be prepared for the birth and have a plan for how the delivery will be managed. After the birth, the new mother and baby should be seen by a health care worker within 24 hours, at three days and at seven days after delivery to make sure they are healthy and have not developed any problems. The father should be involved in these important actions to protect the health of the mother and baby.

Parents have been entrusted with the wonderful blessing of children, but there is much responsibility that goes along with this gift. Islam gives us direction on how the man of the house should behave and care for his family. The Prophet said, *“The best among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most benevolent and most caring to his family.”* (Hadith; Tirmiji 3830)

Allah tells us in the Quran how the relationship between man and wife should be. We read, *“...and one of Allah’s signs is, that He has created for you mates from yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and has ordained between you Love and Mercy.”* (Quran 30:21) To achieve

tranquility in life, good health should be a priority. By taking care of our physical needs, we are freer to pursue our spiritual needs.

The man and woman must act as a team as they go through life together. A man must think of his wife's needs as much as his own, especially during and after pregnancy. Remember Allah tells us, *"The father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother's food and clothing on a reasonable basis. No person shall have a burden laid on him greater than he can bear..."* (Quran 2:233)

Pregnancy and childbirth can be a difficult and dangerous time for a woman and her baby, and they need the protection, guidance and support of the man of the family. Guiding a woman and baby through this trying time is one of the most important roles a man can fill. Allah commands us to love our family members. There is no greater expression of love than caring for and providing for our family.

Khutbah 9: As Allah Intended

Message: Harmful Practices of Female Genital Cutting, Violence against Women, Forced Marriage and Very Young Motherhood Harm Women, Families and Communities

There are practices in our societies that are harmful to women and their families such as female genital cutting, violence against women, forced marriage and very young motherhood.

Cutting the genitals of a girl or woman (also called female circumcision) is a tradition that has been part of many societies for generations. It is the partial or total removal of the external genitals when there is no medical reason for it. Parents and other relatives may feel it is in the best interest of the girl so that she may find a suitable husband and be accepted as part of her society. However, it is a very dangerous practice and is extremely painful and traumatic for the girl and can even result in death.

Girls who have had their genitals cut are vulnerable to infections and severe bleeding. Over the long term, women can suffer from chronic pain, decreased or nonexistent sexual enjoyment, and psychological problems. Female genital cutting has been internationally recognized as a violation of human rights and many countries have policies and laws to ban it. There is some evidence that the practice is decreasing, but the decline has been slow. There is also a disturbing trend of health care professionals performing the practice.

Women who have had their genitals cut often have difficulty during childbirth, which can endanger the lives of their babies. The vaginal tissue has difficulty stretching properly due to scarring, and the women have a higher incidence of obstructed labor and of birth by caesarian section (where the baby must be removed through an incision in the abdomen). Women with altered genitals are also more vulnerable to severe bleeding after childbirth.

In your role as a spiritual leader, you can educate your congregation and community about the dangers of female genital cutting and discourage this harmful practice. Families will need your support to stop the practice. Although the practice is not encouraged by Islam, societal pressures to continue it are strong. Families and their daughters may fear rejection if the girls have not undergone genital cutting. Traditions of giving gifts and having celebrations after genital cutting have further encouraged this dangerous practice.

Another disturbing practice in our society is violence in any form against a woman, including violence in the home. A study by the World Health Organization of 10 countries in various parts of the world showed the percentage of women who had ever been in an intimate relationship and had been abused ranged from 13% in the nation with the lowest occurrence to as high as 61% of women in the country with the highest.

Violence in the home is often ignored by others in the community, and viewed as a private matter between husband and wife. Husbands may feel it is acceptable to use violence against a wife. Women themselves may believe abuse from their husbands is normal and must be tolerated. This attitude is not only detrimental to women, but also to the children who witness the violence and to the community as a whole.

Women who are abused by a husband or partner can suffer a variety of physical injuries—from bruises and abrasions to disfigurement or death. Violence to a pregnant woman is extremely harmful to the baby she carries. According to the World Health Organization, women who have experienced violence from a husband or intimate partner are more likely to suffer miscarriages than women who are not abused.

Another custom that is common in some societies, but is dangerous to the physical and emotional health of women, is marriage at a very young age. This practice puts girls at risk of becoming pregnant before it is healthy for their growing bodies. If a girl has a baby before she is fully developed, she is at a greater risk for labor that lasts much longer than normal because the baby is not able to pass through her underdeveloped birth canal. It is recommended for health reasons that a girl wait until she is at least 18 years old to have a baby. In addition to the potential physical harm of young marriage and motherhood, a girl who gives up an education for marriage and motherhood is missing opportunities to fulfill her potential and use the talents and skills bestowed on her by Allah.

The overall status of women in a society contributes greatly to their ability to protect themselves from abusive relationships. The attitude that women are inferior or that their contributions are not as important as those of men is not only incorrect, it is detrimental to the community as a whole. The community is deprived of the God-given talents and skills of a woman if society restricts or harms her ability to share them. You can influence attitudes among your congregation and discourage destructive behaviors that hurt women with your sermons and the wisdom you share in counseling.

Scripture Used in Sermon

“...and one of Allah’s signs is, that He has created for you mates from yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and has ordained between you Love and Mercy.” (Quran 30:21)

“There shall be no infliction of harm on oneself or others.” (The Prophet as Narrated by Al-Daraqutni following Abu Saeed Al-Khudri)

“It is Allah Who has made for you the earth as a resting place and the sky as a canopy, and has given you shape – and made your shape beautiful.” (Quran 40:64)

“There is no altering Allah’s creation.” (Quran 30:30)

“It is lawful for you to go in unto your wives during the night preceding the day’s fast; they are as a garment for you and you are as a garment for them.” (Quran 2:187)

“The most perfect of believers in the matter of faith is he whose behavior is best; and the best of you are those who behave best towards their wives.” (Hadith; Ibn-Hanbal, 7396)

“O ye who believe! Ye are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should ye treat them with harshness...” (Quran 4:19)

“A woman came to Allah’s Apostle and said, ‘O Allah’s Apostle! Men (only) benefit by your teachings, so please devote to us from (some of) your time, a day on which we may come to you so that you may teach us of what Allah has taught you.’ Allah’s Apostle said, ‘Gather on such-and-such a day at such-and-such a place.’ They gathered and Allah’s Apostle came to them and taught them of what Allah had taught him.” (Hadith; Bukhari Volume 9, Book 92, Number 413)

Suggestions for Sermon: As Allah Intended

Allah created man and woman. He created them to live together in a tranquil and loving partnership. We read in the Quran, *“...and one of Allah’s signs is, that He has created for you mates from yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and has ordained between you Love and Mercy.”* (Quran 30:21)

Allah designed the woman’s form to bear children, and to give and receive sexual pleasure during relations with her husband. He designed the man’s form to father children, and also to give and receive pleasure to his wife in the same manner. We must be very careful when we alter Allah’s creation and interfere with His intentions.

Over the years, a practice has developed in many societies that is harmful to girls and women, and interferes with Allah’s intentions. The practice of cutting the genitals of young girls or women has become a tradition in many societies, and many of us probably do not question whether it is right or wrong. We do not intend to harm our daughters, we are performing a custom that our elders taught us was the right thing to do.

However, we now know that there are many dangers and no benefits from the practice of female genital cutting, which is painful and traumatic. Is this what Allah intended? It is unlawful to harm our bodies or the bodies of others. As the Prophet said, *“There shall be no infliction of harm on oneself or others.”* (The Prophet as Narrated by Al-Daraqutni following Abu Saeed Al-Khudri)

Cutting the genitals of our daughters and other young girls in our families harms them in many ways. The girl or woman may have severe bleeding and will be vulnerable to infections. If the cutting is severe, the result can even be fatal. Doctors and other health care experts have found that when a girl becomes a woman, she is more likely to have problems and dangerous complications when she gives birth to her own baby if she has had her genitals cut.

A recent study by the World Health Organization showed that babies born to mothers who have experienced genital cutting are more likely to die shortly after birth than babies born to mothers who have not had their genitals altered. Women with altered genitals are also more vulnerable to severe bleeding after childbirth. Allah designed the woman’s body to deliver babies, and it is not our place to change that design and hinder what He has created.

We must consider very carefully any action that alters the bodies that Allah has created. As the Quran tells us, *“It is Allah Who has made for you the earth as a resting place and the sky as a canopy, and has given you shape – and made your shape beautiful.”* (Quran 40:64) Yes, there are times when we are sick or injured where surgery is necessary to restore our health, but the drastic step of cutting the healthy tissue of a young girl does not restore health, but rather is harmful to her and interferes in her living a normal life as Allah ordained. Remember, *“There is no altering Allah’s creation.”* (Quran 30:30)

We should investigate the reasons behind the practice of cutting young girls and women, and seriously consider whether we are following Allah’s intentions. When the genitals of a woman have been altered or removed, her sexual enjoyment is likely diminished or nonexistent, which interferes with Allah’s plan for a healthy relationship between husband and wife. The enjoyment of sexual relations should be equal among husband and wife for us to fulfill Allah’s intentions. He tells us, *“It is lawful for you to go in unto your wives during the night preceding the day’s fast; they are as a garment for you and you are as a garment for them.”* (Quran 2:187) Wives are like a garment for their husbands, and husbands are like a garment for their wives. The two are equals and they are equally important to each other. The pleasure derived by the man should be equaled by the pleasure derived by his wife. As female genital cutting interferes with a woman’s healthy enjoyment of sexual relations, it damages the special bond Allah has given to a husband and wife.

As Allah commands, the relationship between husband and wife should be tranquil and loving. There is another practice in our societies that is harmful to women and interferes with Allah’s intentions. The tranquility Allah expects becomes impossible if there is violence in the home. A husband may believe it is permissible to hit his wife or discipline her in some physical way when he is angry or believes she deserves some form of punishment. A woman may believe she must endure the physical and emotional abuse from her husband because she has come to expect it. However, this

attitude is harmful to both partners in the relationship. Compassion, understanding, trust and peace are what we should strive for in our marriages.

How a man treats his wife is judged very carefully by Allah. The Prophet tells us, *“The most perfect of believers in the matter of faith is he whose behavior is best; and the best of you are those who behave best towards their wives.”* (Hadith; Ibn-Hanbal, 7396) A true man of faith will demonstrate his belief with good behavior, which is expressed through kindness to his wife. A husband who causes physical or emotional pain to his wife is not demonstrating kindness. Violent acts such as striking a woman can result in severe emotional damage, physical injuries or even death. The damaging effects of abuse touch the entire family and can even extend to the community. Children are harmed by witnessing acts of violence in their homes. In addition to the harm done to women and their children, the community is damaged by the loss of a productive member when a woman is plagued by emotional distress resulting from the abuse.

Becoming a wife is a very important step in a woman’s life. When is a woman ready to take that step and become a wife? To fulfill Allah’s commandment that husbands and wives live in love and tranquility—and be as comforting as a garment to each other—they both must be physically and emotionally mature. In many cases in our communities, young girls are married before they are ready. Allah tells us in the Quran that women and young girls must not be forced into marriage against their will. *“O ye who believe! Ye are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should ye treat them with harshness...”* (Quran 4:19)

This practice of very young or forced marriage is physically and emotionally damaging to the girl. Becoming pregnant before her growing body has developed is dangerous. During childbirth she will be vulnerable to an especially long labor because her underdeveloped body is not ready for childbirth. The baby will not be able to pass through the birth canal and both the mother and baby are at risk of death or serious injury.

A young girl is still developing in many ways, including physically, emotionally and spiritually. Allah encourages both men and women to learn and develop their minds. In a Hadith, we are told: *“A woman came to Allah’s Apostle and said, ‘O Allah’s Apostle! Men (only) benefit by your teachings, so please devote to us from (some of) your time, a day on which we may come to you so that you may teach us of what Allah has taught you.’ Allah’s Apostle said, ‘Gather on such-and-such a day at such-and-such a place.’ They gathered and Allah’s Apostle came to them and taught them of what Allah had taught him.”* (Bukhari Volume 9, Book 92, Number 413) Young girls should finish growing and be educated before they have babies too early and endanger their health. Their minds should grow while their bodies are still developing. When they do become wives, they will be better prepared not only physically, but also spiritually and emotionally.

Allah intended a woman to be a partner to her husband—joined in a loving and affectionate marriage. The marriage should be fulfilling spiritually and physically. Altering the woman’s genitals, forcing her to marry too young or subjecting her to any form of violence in the home is not what He intended. We should turn to scripture and the Word of Allah in the Quran to guide us in creating the loving, peaceful home He intended for His children.

Khutbah 10: The First Food—From the Hand of Allah

Message: Breastfeeding for a Healthy Start

Doctors and scientists know that breast milk provides the best nutrition possible for newborns and infants. It gives babies all the nutrients they need for a healthy start in life. Breast milk contains antibodies to help protect babies from dangerous illnesses such as diarrhea and pneumonia, which kill more than four million children annually worldwide.

Breastfeeding is especially important for families who lack access to clean water. Powdered formula mixed with unclean water puts babies at risk for water-borne diseases. Furthermore, breast milk does not cost the family money, which helps to ensure that infants get adequate nutrition. If families use formula and then are unable to obtain it, the mother's milk supply is likely to have diminished or may be completely gone.

Breastfeeding is also helpful to mothers. It reduces the risks of breast and ovarian cancer later in life and helps the new mother return to her pre-pregnancy weight. Although breastfeeding is not a fail-safe method of contraception, the mother is less likely to become pregnant while she is still breastfeeding as long as she is exclusively breastfeeding the baby and her menses have not returned.

The World Health Organization recommends that mothers breastfeed their babies within the first hour of life if possible. The initial fluid is called colostrum and it contains important antibodies the baby needs. The baby should be fed as often as he or she is hungry, which will help increase the mother's milk supply and ensure that the baby is getting enough nutrients. Mothers should try to feed babies only breast milk for the first six months of life. They should continue to breastfeed after six months while introducing other foods as their health care providers advise.



Women may need support from others to learn proper breastfeeding techniques. A new mother will likely need other nursing women or trained health care providers to teach her how to breastfeed comfortably. You should encourage the women in your congregation to reach out for help if they need it. Health clinics should be able to provide assistance to new mothers. The whole family, especially the father, should be supportive and help the mother in any way she needs so that she can continue breastfeeding.

Sharing the benefits of breastfeeding and encouraging it among families in your congregation can help give the children in your community a healthy start in life.

Scripture Used in Sermon

“And He giveth you of all that ye ask for. But if ye count the favors of Allah, never will ye be able to number them.” (Quran 14:34)

“He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth...He created all things and He has knowledge of all things.” (Quran, 6:101)

“We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents: In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months.” (Quran 46:15)

“The best among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most benevolent and most caring to his family.” (Hadith; Tirmiji 3830)

“Mothers shall suckle their children for two years....The duty of feeding and clothing nursing mothers in a seemly manner is upon the father of the child. No-one should be charged beyond his capacity.” (Quran 2:233)

Suggestions for Sermon: The First Food – From the Hand of Allah

Allah does not leave His creations incomplete. You may not know Allah’s plan for you. It may take years to truly develop the skills and talents Allah has in mind for you, but He has given you the foundation to be the person you will become. It was all there when you were born.

As we read in the Quran, *“And He giveth you of all that ye ask for. But if ye count the favors of Allah, never will ye be able to number them.”* (Quran 14:34) Allah has all we need. We must listen to Allah’s words of guidance and turn to Him to quench our spiritual thirst. It is the same for newborn babies and their mothers. A mother’s breast milk has all the nutrients her baby needs to survive and thrive.

What could be a more perfect food for a new baby than one designed especially for that child? Allah created the earth and all its creatures, knowingly and lovingly providing for their needs. *“He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth...He created all things and He has knowledge of all things.”* (Quran, 6:101)

Doctors and scientists know that breast milk provides the best nutrition possible for newborns and infants. It gives babies all the nutrients they need for a healthy start in life. Breast milk contains substances to help protect babies from dangerous illnesses such as diarrhea and pneumonia, which are responsible for the deaths of more than four million children annually worldwide. Breastfeeding should begin as soon as possible after birth. The initial liquid that appears before the mother’s milk comes in is called colostrum and contains antibodies that help fight diseases.

The mother should continue breastfeeding her baby as long as possible, and breast milk should be the only substance given to the child for the first six months. After six months, other substances can be introduced according to the advice of health care providers. Breastfeeding is also safer than

formula feeding, especially when powdered formula is used and mixed with unsafe water. The baby can become sick from contaminated water and suffer serious diarrhea.

There are a number of references to breastfeeding in scripture. We are specifically told in the Quran that a mother should nurse her baby, and should try to breastfeed for about two years if possible.

“We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents: In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months.” (Quran 46:15)

Breastfeeding is also helpful to mothers. It reduces the risks of breast and ovarian cancer later in life and helps the new mother return to her pre-pregnancy weight. Although breastfeeding is not a fail-safe method of contraception, the mother is less likely to become pregnant while she is still breastfeeding, as long as she is exclusively breastfeeding the baby and her menses have not returned.

Another advantage of breastfeeding is that there is no cost for the milk. The mother can provide the ultimate nutrition for her baby from her own body. She needs to eat a healthy diet and take in more calories than she normally consumes. However, the benefits of the breast milk are well worth it.

We are reminded that Allah expects a father to provide for his wife and children. The Prophet says, *“The best among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most benevolent and most caring to his family.”* (Hadith; Tirmiji 3830) The father has an important role to play in providing support for the baby and mother, and should help ensure that the child is properly nurtured and nourished with breast milk. *“Mothers shall suckle their children for two years.... The duty of feeding and clothing nursing mothers in a seemly manner is upon the father of the child. No-one should be charged beyond his capacity.”* (Quran 2:233)

Mothers, you may need help in learning how to breastfeed. Please ask for the help you need. Other women in your community who have breastfed can help. You can also ask for help from your health care providers. They should be able to help or to tell you where you can get help learning the proper techniques to make breastfeeding comfortable and effective for you and your baby.

Allah has given us the ultimate nourishment for our souls and bodies. We need to turn to His words in scripture to nourish our souls. We turn to our brothers and sisters for help at times in interpreting His word, and we help those who turn to us. Likewise, Allah has given us breast milk—the perfect nourishment for our children. We should also turn to our families and community for help in seeing that we provide this nourishment to our children. It is our responsibility to support our families and the mothers of our children as they give the gift of breast milk, the perfect nutrition for a baby. Remember what the Quran tells us about Allah. *“He giveth you of all that ye ask for....”* Let us rejoice in His favors.

Appendix I: Major Causes of Death and Injury for Mothers and Their Babies

Each year, more than half a million women die of pregnancy-related causes and another 20 million suffer serious and long-lasting illnesses or disabilities. Of the 130 million babies born every year, about four million die in the first four weeks of life. Most of these deaths are from preventable causes and could be avoided with proper health care.

Causes of Death and Injury for the Mother

The five main causes of a mother's death are excessive bleeding, infection, eclampsia (sometimes known as convulsions), labor that lasts much longer than normal and complications of unsafe abortions or incorrect treatment.

Excessive bleeding (hemorrhage): Blood loss during labor can very rapidly lead to death without prompt and appropriate life-saving care such as medicines to control bleeding, massage of the uterus to stimulate contractions or blood transfusion.

Sepsis (resulting from infections): Sepsis, which accounts for 15% of maternal deaths, is often the result of poor hygiene during delivery or untreated sexually transmitted diseases. Infections can be prevented by proper hygiene practices during delivery and detection and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases during pregnancy.

Eclampsia (convulsions): Eclampsia is the cause of approximately 12% of maternal deaths and is a hypertensive (high blood pressure) disorder. These deaths can be prevented through careful monitoring during pregnancy and treatment with anticonvulsant drugs such as magnesium sulfate.

Prolonged labor: Labor that lasts much longer than normal accounts for about 8% of maternal deaths, and can occur when the baby's head cannot pass through the mother's pelvis or when the baby is in the wrong position to pass through the birth canal. When mothers are unusually small, either from a poor diet or because they are very young and not yet fully grown, they are at an increased risk for prolonged labor.

Unsafe abortions: Complications of unsafe abortions are responsible for 13% of maternal deaths. These deaths can be prevented if women have access to family planning information and services, and proper health care for abortion-related complications.

Causes of Death for the Baby

The major causes of newborn death across the globe are:

Infections: 36% of all newborn deaths are caused by infections, including sepsis/pneumonia (26%), tetanus (7%) and diarrhea (3%).

Pre-term birth/low birth weight: 28% of all newborn deaths are caused by pre-term birth or low birth weight. Babies weighing less than normal are either born too early, or born on time but smaller

than normal. Small babies are unable to maintain their body temperature, fight infection or feed normally.

Asphyxia: 23% of all newborn deaths are caused by asphyxia, which occurs when a baby does not receive enough oxygen before, during or just after birth. There are many reasons that birth asphyxia may occur.

Birth defects (also known as congenital abnormalities): 14% of all newborn deaths are caused by birth defects. The causes of most birth defects are unknown, but some are preventable.

Solutions to Save the Lives of Mothers and Babies

The following strategies have been proven to reduce the number of maternal and newborn deaths.

1. Seek help of health care workers and skilled attendants:

- At least four visits to a health care worker beginning in early pregnancy
- Baby should be delivered by a skilled attendant, such as a midwife, doctor or nurse

2. Mother should follow healthy behaviors during pregnancy:

- The mother should eat a healthy diet, take iron and vitamin supplements as prescribed by the health care worker, and be vaccinated against tetanus

3. Malaria prevention:

- Sleep under an insecticide-treated bed net
- Take medicine to prevent malaria (sulphadoxine-pyrimethamine) as prescribed by health care worker

4. Be prepared for the unexpected:

- Develop a plan for the birth including emergency transport if need arises

5. Recognize these danger signs and take immediate action:

- Bleeding, swelling, severe headache, convulsions and severe fatigue

6. Mother and baby must go for a checkup as soon as possible after birth:

- Within 24 hours, at three days and at seven days after birth.

7. Pregnancy spacing:

- Wait at least two years after a birth before becoming pregnant again

8. Man of the family should take responsibility for:

- The health of the woman during pregnancy, birth and after birth
- The health of the new baby

9. Advocate against these practices that harm women, families and communities:

- Female genital cutting
- Violence against women
- Forced marriage
- Very young motherhood

10. Promote breastfeeding for a healthy start

Appendix II: Nutrition in Pregnancy for Healthy Moms and Babies*

A pregnant woman needs to get the right nutrients to support her growing baby. During pregnancy a woman should:

- Eat a balanced diet of beans and nuts, starchy foods (e.g., potatoes, cassava, maize, cereals, rice), animal products (meat, milk, eggs, fish, yogurt, cheese), and fruits and vegetables.
- Eat a variety of foods each day, including foods rich in:
 - Iron: red meat, liver, eggs, peanuts, lentils, dark green leafy vegetables and shellfish. Substances that inhibit iron absorption, such as coffee or tea and calcium supplements, should be avoided or taken two hours after meal.
 - Vitamin A: liver, milk products, eggs, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, carrots, papaya, palm oil, mangos, tomatoes, avocado, pumpkins, okra, spinach and amaranths.
 - Calcium: milk, dark green leafy vegetables, shrimp, dried fish, beans, lentils, whole grain millets and oil seeds.
 - Magnesium: cereals, dark green leafy vegetables, seafood, nuts, legumes and groundnuts.
 - Vitamin C: oranges or other citrus fruits, tomatoes, leafy greens and potatoes.
 - Vitamin E: avocado, groundnuts, cashew nuts, corn oil, spinach, liver, eggs and mango.
 - Thiamine (vitamin B1): whole grain cereals; wheat germ; maize; millet and sorghum; lean meat, especially pork, liver and poultry; eggs; fish; dried beans; peas; and soybeans.
 - Riboflavin (vitamin B2): whole grain cereals, wheat germ, maize, millet, sorghum, fish, lean meats, eggs, legumes, nuts (groundnuts, cashew nuts, oyster nuts), pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, green leafy vegetables, dairy products and milk.
 - Niacin (vitamin B3): whole grain cereals, wheat germ, maize, millet, sorghum, dairy products, milk, poultry, fish, lean meats, nuts (especially groundnuts), legumes, mushroom, avocado, baobab fruits and eggs.

* The information in this appendix was compiled from Nutrition and Pregnancy resources of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 409 12th St., S.W., PO Box 96920, Washington, D.C. 20090-6920; and the Food and Nutrition Information Center of the National Agriculture Library USDA, 10301 Baltimore Ave., Room 105 Beltsville, MD 201705-2351.

- Vitamin B6: nuts, legumes, eggs, meats, fish, whole grains, sweet potatoes, avocado and cabbage.
- Vitamin B12: eggs, meat, poultry, shellfish, milk, milk products and fermented foods, such as yogurt and togwa.
- Folic acid: beans and legumes, oranges, tangerines, tamarind, limes, lemons, guava, baobab fruits, grape fruits, grapes, passion fruit, mabungo, strawberries, whole grains cereals, dark green leafy vegetables, meat, poultry, shellfish, fish, liver and avocado.

Pregnant women should also:

- Eat at least one additional serving of staple food per day.
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals if unable to consume larger amounts in fewer meals.
- Take supplements (iron and vitamins) as advised by a health care worker.

It is recommended that women and families use locally available foods that will provide pregnant women with essential nutrients.

Appendix III: Are You Ready for Baby? A Birth Preparedness Plan

Every woman and baby is at risk of developing a life-threatening complication. Most of these complications cannot be predicted. However, with advanced planning they can be managed. Preparing for the birth and possible complications can help avoid tragedy and save the life of the mother and baby.

Birth Preparedness Checklist:

Before a mother gives birth, the family should work with a health care worker to plan the following:

- Where the baby will be delivered
- Which skilled attendant (midwife, doctor or nurse) will help her with the delivery
- How you will contact the skilled attendant
- Family knows which supplies are needed for birth and has them ready
- How the mother will get to the facility when it is time
- How to pay for the cost of care
- Who will take care of the family's children while the mother is away
- Entire family/household knows the plan

Prepare for the Unexpected: Checklist to Manage Complications:

Early in the woman's pregnancy, the family should work with a health care worker to answer the following questions:

- Are all members in the household able to recognize danger signs in pregnancy?

- Who will make the decision that emergency care is needed? Who can make the decision if that person is not home?
- Which health care facility will be used if danger signs appear?
- Which supplies are needed and are they ready?
- How will the mother be transported to the facility?
- Who will stay with the family's children in case emergency care is needed?
- Who will donate blood if it becomes necessary?
- How will the cost of emergency care be paid for?

Danger Signs during Pregnancy:

A family should go to the nearest health facility if the pregnant mother experiences any of the following danger signs:

- Vaginal bleeding or foul-smelling/fluid from vagina
- Breathing difficulty
- Fever
- Decrease/absence of fetal movements
- Severe headache
- Severe abdominal pain
- Swelling of face and hands
- Convulsions/loss of consciousness
- Leaking of greenish/brownish fluid from vagina
- Unusual fatigue

Items Needed for Clean and Safe Birth and Newborn Care:

Families should make sure the following items are available for the birth and for the baby immediately following birth.

BIRTH	Perineal pads/cloths, soap, clean bed clothes, placenta receptacle, clean, unused razor blade, waterproof/plastic cover, clean cord ties
NEWBORN	Blankets, diapers/napkins, hat, clothes, etc. that have been washed and dried in the sun

Appendix IV: Care for the New Mother and Baby after Birth

The mother and baby should be seen by a health care worker for checkups within 24 hours, at three days and at seven days after birth. In addition, it is recommended that small or low birth weight babies (weighing less than 2500g) receive an extra visit from a health care worker five days after birth.

In addition to the checkups, the family should seek medical attention if any of the following danger signs are seen in the mother or baby.

Danger Signs in Mother	Danger Signs in Baby
Vaginal bleeding (heavy or sudden increase) Breathing difficulty Fever Severe abdominal pain Severe headache/blurred vision Convulsion/loss of consciousness Foul-smelling discharge from vagina or tears/incision Pain in calf, with or without swelling Verbalization/behavior that indicates she may hurt the baby or herself, or hallucinations	Breathing difficulty Blueness Cold to touch Yellowness (jaundice) Diarrhea Persistent vomiting or abdominal distention Not feeding or poor suckling Swollen limb or joint Lethargy (moving only when stimulated) Convulsions, spasms, loss of consciousness or back arching Hot to touch/fever (temperature above 37.5°C) Temperature below 35.5°C Rapid breathing (respiratory rate faster than 60 breaths per minute) Chest indrawing (inward movement of lower chest while breathing) Bleeding Pallor Pus or redness of the skin Floppiness

Feeding the Baby

Breastfeeding has many **benefits** for the woman and newborn, including:

- Provides the best nutrition for the newborn:
 - Is easily digested and efficiently used by the baby's body
 - Protects against infection and other illnesses
 - Offers some protection against allergies
- Is cost-effective/affordable
- Promotes mother-baby bonding
- Provides the woman with some level of contraceptive protection until menses return (as long as she is exclusively breastfeeding and the baby is under six months old)

General principles of early and exclusive breastfeeding:

- Babies should begin breastfeeding as soon as possible after birth (preferably within the first hour) and continue for the first six months of life.
- Colostrum, the first milk, should be given to the baby, not thrown away.
- The baby should be breastfed exclusively for the first six months of life. This means that nothing else should be given to the baby to drink or eat during that time.

- The baby should be breastfed whenever s/he wants, day and night (on demand), which stimulates the breasts to produce an adequate supply of breast milk.

Maintaining Warmth

- The woman and baby should be kept in skin-to-skin contact, covered with a clean, dry blanket/ covering, as much as possible for the first six hours after birth.
 - If the baby cannot be in skin-to-skin contact with the woman (or after six hours), dress her/him in an extra layer or two (in addition to what is comfortable for adults) of clothing or blankets/covering.
- Do not bathe the baby for at least the first 24 hours, and not until the baby's temperature is stable.
- Avoid dressing the baby in tight, restrictive clothing or blanket/coverings because they reduce the retention of heat.
- Cover the baby's head with hat.
- Keep the room warm (25°C or more) and free from drafts.
- Check the newborn's feet at least every four hours for the first 24 hours or until his/her temperature is stable.
 - If the feet feel cold in comparison to normal adult skin, extra warmth is required immediately; add a layer of clothing and blanket/coverings.
 - If the feet feel hot in comparison to normal adult skin, remove a layer of clothing and blankets/coverings.
 - If the feet remain cold or hot for one hour after the above changes are made, enact the complication readiness plan.

Prevention of Infection

The following practices are especially important in the first months of life because the baby's immune system (protection against infections) is still developing and may be more susceptible to infections:

- In general, the woman and other people should wash their hands before touching or caring for the baby. They should also wash their hands after cleaning the baby or changing her/his diaper/napkin.
- The mother should care for her own baby as much as possible.
- Sharing of baby equipment and supplies with other babies and children should be avoided.
- Sick children and adults should be kept away from the baby because of the risk of cross-infection (from one person to another).
- The baby should be protected from smoke, which can result in respiratory problems.
- The mother should remain vigilant for signs of infection and other newborn danger signs. If any of these signs are seen, she should immediately enact the complication readiness plan.

- Other practices that help protect the baby from infection include the following:
 - Breastfeeding
 - Proper cord care
 - Getting the recommended immunizations
 - Sleeping under an insecticide-treated (bed) net in malaria-endemic areas

Washing and Bathing

- The baby should not be bathed for the first 24 hours, and not until the baby's temperature is stable.
- Soap is not necessary and should never be used on a baby's face; mild soap can be used on the rest of the baby's body.
- While bathing the newborn, the family should remain vigilant for signs of infection and other danger signs, especially in skin fold areas around neck and groin.
- It is not necessary to bathe the newborn daily, especially if it is difficult to ensure a warm environment for the bath; however, the baby's groin/genitals and buttocks should be washed and dried each time the diaper/napkin is soiled/wet.

Vaccines/Immunizations

The baby should be immunized according to the schedule below.

VACCINE	DUE
BCG to protect against tuberculosis	After birth
OPV-0 to protect against poliomyelitis	After birth
HB-1 to protect against hepatitis B	After birth

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The ACCESS Program is the U.S. Agency for International Development’s global program to improve maternal and newborn health. The ACCESS Program works to expand coverage, access and use of key maternal and newborn health services across a continuum of care from the household to the hospital—with the aim of making quality health services accessible as close to the home as possible. Jhpiego implements the program in partnership with Save the Children, Constella Futures, the Academy for Educational Development, the American College of Nurse-Midwives and IMA World Health.