

# Family Centered Antenatal Care

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**Abstract:** *Family-centered antenatal care (FCAC) is an emerging approach that emphasizes the involvement of family members, particularly partners, in the care of pregnant women to enhance maternal and neonatal outcomes. Traditional antenatal care has largely focused on the clinical management of pregnancy, often overlooking the influence of family support on maternal well-being. This review aims to synthesize existing literature on the concept, theoretical foundations, significance, effectiveness, and challenges associated with family-centered antenatal care. A comprehensive review of literature was conducted using published articles, systematic reviews, and organizational guidelines related to family-centered care in the antenatal period. The findings indicate that FCAC promotes emotional support, reduces maternal stress and anxiety, improves health-seeking behaviors, and enhances birth preparedness. Involvement of family members in antenatal education and decision-making has been associated with increased maternal satisfaction, improved pregnancy outcomes, and better neonatal health indicators. Furthermore, healthcare providers play a crucial role in facilitating family participation through effective communication, education, and supportive care practices. Despite its benefits, the implementation of FCAC faces several barriers, including lack of standardized guidelines, cultural constraints, limited resources, and inadequate training of healthcare professionals. The review also identifies gaps in the existing literature, particularly the need for high-quality studies and culturally tailored interventions, especially in low- and middle-income countries. In conclusion, family-centered antenatal care represents a holistic and effective approach to maternal healthcare that integrates the family as an essential component of care. Strengthening FCAC practices through policy support, education, and research can significantly contribute to improving maternal and neonatal outcomes.*

**Keywords:** family support in pregnancy, antenatal care practices, maternal wellbeing, neonatal health outcomes, partner involvement in care

## 1. Introduction

Antenatal care is a critical component of maternal healthcare aimed at ensuring the well-being of both the mother and the developing fetus. Traditionally, antenatal services have focused primarily on the clinical and physiological aspects of pregnancy, often centering care exclusively on the pregnant woman. However, emerging evidence highlights that pregnancy is not an isolated experience but a significant life event that affects the entire family unit. In this context, the concept of family-centered care has gained increasing recognition as an essential approach to improving maternal and neonatal outcomes. Family Voices defines family-centered care as a collaborative partnership between healthcare providers, individuals, and families, built on mutual respect, information sharing, and shared decision-making.

Family-centered antenatal care (FCAC) extends this philosophy into the antenatal period by actively involving family members, particularly spouses or partners in the care process. This approach acknowledges the vital role of family support in influencing maternal health behaviors, emotional well-being, and pregnancy outcomes. Research indicates that the inclusion of family members in antenatal education and care planning enhances maternal confidence, reduces anxiety, and promotes better preparedness for childbirth (Mane et al., 2024; Shimpuku et al., 2019). Moreover, FCAC aligns with holistic healthcare principles by addressing not only the physical but also the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of pregnancy.

Despite its recognized benefits, the integration of family-centered approaches into routine antenatal care remains inconsistent, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where healthcare systems face multiple constraints. Variations in cultural practices, healthcare infrastructure, and provider readiness further influence the extent to which

family members are involved in care. Therefore, a comprehensive review of the existing literature is essential to understand the concept, significance, effectiveness, and challenges associated with family-centered antenatal care.

This review aims to critically examine the available evidence on family-centered antenatal care, focusing on its theoretical foundations, impact on maternal and neonatal outcomes, role of healthcare providers, and barriers to implementation. By synthesizing current research findings, this review seeks to provide a deeper understanding of FCAC and its potential to enhance the quality of maternal healthcare services.

### Concept of Family-Centered Antenatal Care

Family-centered antenatal care (FCAC) is an approach that recognizes pregnancy as not only a physiological process affecting the woman but also a significant life event influencing the entire family unit. This model emphasizes collaboration between healthcare providers, pregnant women, and their families, particularly partners, in planning, decision-making, and care provision. Unlike traditional antenatal care, which primarily focuses on the individual woman, FCAC broadens the scope to include emotional, social, and psychological support systems that surround the mother. The philosophy of family-centered care is grounded in mutual respect, information sharing, and shared responsibility, thereby promoting a holistic approach to maternal health (Family Voices, 2023; Enkin, 2000). This approach aligns well with modern nursing principles that advocate for patient-centered and family-inclusive care practices, recognizing that family involvement can significantly influence maternal behaviors and outcomes.

### Theoretical Basis of Family-Centered Antenatal Care

The foundation of family-centered antenatal care lies in several theoretical frameworks, particularly family systems theory and person-centered care models. Family systems theory views the family as an interconnected unit in which

changes in one member affect the entire system. Pregnancy, therefore, is seen as a transitional phase impacting roles, relationships, and responsibilities within the family. In this context, involving family members in antenatal care helps facilitate smoother adaptation to these changes. Additionally, person-centered care models emphasize dignity, autonomy, and respect for the individual's preferences, extending these principles to include family dynamics and cultural values. Recent literature suggests that FCAC also incorporates psychosocial developmental theories, recognizing pregnancy as a period of emotional growth and adjustment not only for the mother but also for her partner and family members (Henry & Côté-Arsenault, 2024). These theoretical perspectives collectively support the integration of family-centered approaches into antenatal care practices.

### Importance of Family Involvement in Antenatal Care

Family involvement plays a critical role in enhancing maternal health outcomes during pregnancy. Emotional support provided by family members, particularly spouses, has been shown to reduce anxiety, stress, and feelings of isolation among pregnant women. Studies indicate that women who receive consistent emotional and practical support from their families are more likely to adhere to antenatal care recommendations, maintain proper nutrition, and engage in healthy behaviors (Mane et al., 2024). Furthermore, partner involvement fosters a sense of shared responsibility and strengthens the emotional bond between the couple, which can positively influence the pregnancy experience. The presence of supportive family members also contributes to increased maternal confidence and preparedness for childbirth. In many cultural contexts, including in India, family plays a central role in decision-making, making their involvement essential for the successful implementation of antenatal care interventions.

### Impact of Family-Centered Antenatal Care on Maternal and Neonatal Outcomes

A growing body of evidence highlights the positive impact of family-centered antenatal care on both maternal and neonatal outcomes. Studies have demonstrated that FCAC is associated with improved maternal satisfaction, reduced levels of stress and anxiety, and better psychological well-being. Additionally, family involvement in antenatal education and care planning has been linked to improved birth preparedness and complication readiness, which are crucial factors in reducing maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality (Shimpuku et al., 2019). Systematic reviews have further shown that family-centered approaches can contribute to increased rates of normal vaginal delivery and decreased rates of unnecessary medical interventions, such as cesarean sections (Habboush, 2025). Neonatal outcomes, including birth weight and early initiation of breastfeeding, have also been positively influenced by family support during pregnancy. These findings underscore the importance of integrating family-centered strategies into routine antenatal care services.

### Role of Healthcare Providers in Implementing FCAC

Healthcare providers, particularly nurses and midwives, play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of family-centered antenatal care. Their responsibilities extend beyond clinical care to include facilitating effective communication,

building trust, and encouraging active participation of family members in the care process. Providers are instrumental in educating families about pregnancy, childbirth, and newborn care, thereby empowering them to support the mother effectively. However, the attitudes and competencies of healthcare providers significantly influence the extent to which FCAC is practiced. Research indicates that providers who are trained in communication skills and family-centered approaches are more likely to engage families in meaningful ways (Lazar et al., 2021). Conversely, lack of training, time constraints, and heavy workloads can hinder the adoption of FCAC practices. Therefore, capacity building and institutional support are essential for promoting family-centered care in antenatal settings.

### Educational Interventions in Family-Centered Antenatal Care

Educational interventions form a core component of family-centered antenatal care, as they equip both pregnant women and their family members with the knowledge and skills required for effective participation in care. These interventions often include structured antenatal classes, counseling sessions, and informational materials tailored to the needs of families. Evidence suggests that family-centered education improves knowledge regarding pregnancy, childbirth, nutrition, and newborn care, leading to better health outcomes (Dewi et al., 2024). Additionally, such interventions help modify attitudes and behaviors, encouraging supportive practices such as attending antenatal visits, assisting with household responsibilities, and providing emotional reassurance. In low-resource settings, brief and targeted educational sessions have been found to be feasible and effective in enhancing family involvement. These findings highlight the potential of educational strategies in strengthening the implementation of FCAC.

### Barriers to Implementation of Family-Centered Antenatal Care

Despite its recognized benefits, the implementation of family-centered antenatal care faces several challenges. One of the primary barriers is the lack of standardized guidelines and clear definitions of FCAC, which leads to variability in practice. Cultural norms and gender roles may also restrict the involvement of certain family members, particularly male partners, in antenatal care. Additionally, healthcare systems in many low- and middle-income countries are often overburdened, limiting the time and resources available for family-centered interventions. Studies have also identified inadequate training of healthcare providers and lack of institutional support as significant obstacles (Schuler et al., 2025). Furthermore, infrastructural limitations, such as lack of space and privacy in healthcare settings, can hinder family participation. Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach involving policy changes, training programs, and resource allocation.

### Gaps in Literature

Although the concept of family-centered antenatal care is gaining attention, several gaps remain in the existing literature. There is a lack of high-quality randomized controlled trials evaluating the effectiveness of FCAC interventions, particularly in diverse cultural settings. Additionally, variations in study designs, intervention

components, and outcome measures make it difficult to compare findings across studies. There is also limited research focusing on the long-term impact of family-centered care on maternal and child health outcomes. In the Indian context, studies exploring culturally appropriate models of FCAC are scarce. These gaps highlight the need for further research to develop standardized frameworks and generate robust evidence to support the widespread adoption of FCAC.

## 2. Conclusion

Family-centered antenatal care represents a holistic and collaborative approach to maternal healthcare that acknowledges the vital role of family support in improving pregnancy outcomes. By integrating theoretical principles, educational interventions, and supportive practices, FCAC enhances maternal well-being, promotes positive health behaviors, and contributes to better neonatal outcomes. However, challenges related to implementation and gaps in evidence necessitate further research and policy support. Strengthening family-centered approaches in antenatal care has the potential to significantly improve maternal and child health, particularly in resource-limited settings.

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