

A HEALTHY BABY BEGINS WITH YOU



*Infant mortality is not only a personal tragedy, it is a community tragedy.
When a baby dies, part of the community's future dies.*



African-American Infant Mortality



Celebrating a baby's birth should be a joyous and momentous time for a family. Unfortunately, the celebration ends too soon when a baby doesn't live to see his first birthday. Infant mortality rates among African Americans are more than double that of the United States as a whole. That's more than 7,500 infant deaths per year.

A Black woman living in Miami-Dade County is two and a half times more likely than her white neighbor to have her baby die in the first year of life.

Contributing Factors

An infant's survival and long-term health is influenced by many factors, including the mother's age, health status and behavior during and after pregnancy.

Health researchers have identified the following nine risk factors that contribute to infant mortality:

- Late Prenatal Care
- Smoking
- Substance Abuse
- Poor Nutrition
- Obesity
- High Stress
- Domestic Violence
- Low Maternal Weight Gain
- Preterm Labor

Taking Care of Your Health Before Pregnancy

- Get a check-up for high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, seizures and thyroid disease.
- Get tested for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Take a vitamin with folic acid every day.

All women should be taking care of their health by having regular or annual physical check-ups which may include:

- ✓ a breast exam
- ✓ a mammogram (after age 40)
- ✓ a pelvic examination and a pap smear

Healthy Habits To Prevent Chronic Health Problems

- Maintain a healthy diet which includes plenty of fruits, vegetables and low fat dairy products.
- Reduce salt intake.
- If you drink, limit the amount of alcoholic beverages.
- Alcohol should not be consumed if a woman thinks she may be or is actually pregnant or breastfeeding
- Do 30 minutes of physical activity each day.
- Quit smoking
- Ask your doctor what your blood pressure numbers are and what they mean.
- If you are prescribed medication – take it exactly as your doctor instructs.
- Maintain a healthy weight for your height to prevent obesity.
- Visit your health care provider regularly.

How to get the most from your healthcare visit

- Ask Questions. Make a list of questions before visiting your doctor and ask your doctor or nurse to review medical terms that you do not understand.
- Ask your doctor to explain or demonstrate recommended treatment and draw pictures if needed.
- Call your doctor or nurse after your appointment if you are confused or if you still have questions.
- Make sure that you understand how often you are required to take your medication and whether or not you should take with certain foods. Ask about any side effects of the prescribed medication.
- Keep a calendar of your medical appointments and annual check-ups; list your doctor's phone number nearby.

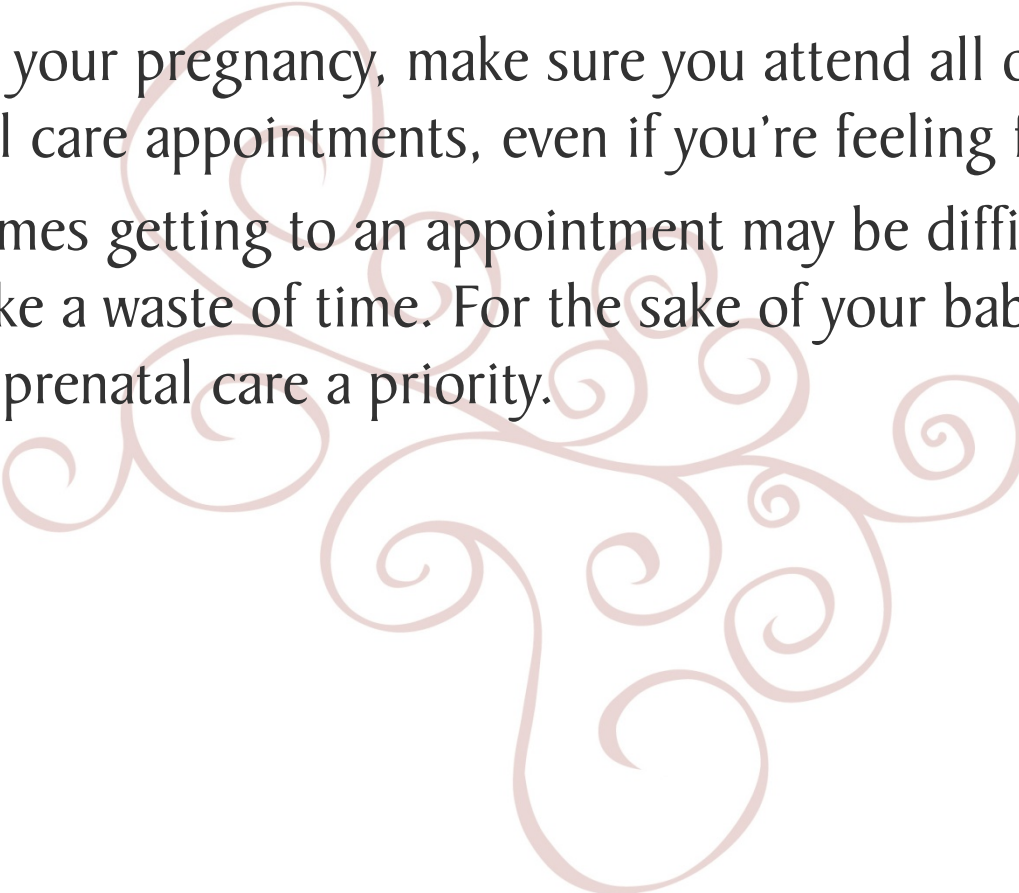
Taking Care of Your Health During Pregnancy

- Get information about having a healthy pregnancy from your health care provider.
- Make and keep your prenatal care appointments. Ask about complications or risks you may have. Visit your dentist for a cleaning.
- Exercise daily, drink plenty of water and take your prenatal vitamins.
- Get rest, relax and don't stress. Make yourself a priority. Find a support group.
- Check fetal movement every day by counting your baby's kicks.
- Call your provider immediately if you have cramps, bleeding or leakage.
- Don't smoke, drink alcohol or use drugs.
- Don't douche and protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections.

Why is prenatal care so important?

- Prenatal care is the medical care you get while you are pregnant.
- Your doctor or midwife monitors the progress of your pregnancy and identifies potential problems before they become serious for either you or your baby.
- All mothers-to-be benefit from prenatal care. Women who see a health care provider regularly during pregnancy have healthier babies, are less likely to have their babies born too small or too soon, and are less likely to have other serious problems related to pregnancy.

All women need prenatal care.

- During your pregnancy, make sure you attend all of your prenatal care appointments, even if you're feeling fine.
 - Sometimes getting to an appointment may be difficult or it may seem like a waste of time. For the sake of your baby, make getting prenatal care a priority.
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What if you are high-risk?

- A woman with a chronic medical condition or a “high-risk” pregnancy may have to see her health care provider more often.
- During pregnancy it is not just the health of the pregnant woman that must be watched, but also the health of the unborn baby.
- Maternal health problems like diabetes, low weight gain, and high blood pressure, if gone untreated, can be harmful to your baby. A doctor can monitor your baby's well being directly by listening to the fetal heartbeat, checking the size and positioning of the uterus and baby, and testing for various abnormalities.

Taking Care of Yourself After Pregnancy

- Get a six-week check-up after having your baby.
- Wait at least six weeks before having sex.
- Breastfeed your baby. You'll lose weight and your baby will be healthy.
- Take medications as directed by your physician.
- Eat healthy, with plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Be active! Exercise or do physical activity at least 30 minutes a day.
- Keep stress under control, do pleasant things that will keep you in good spirits.
- Don't smoke, drink or use drugs. They will harm you and your baby.

Taking Care of Your Baby



- Put your baby to sleep on his back EVERY TIME to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- The safest place for your baby to sleep is in a crib. To reduce the risk for SIDS, do not allow your baby to sleep on a couch, sofa, bed, or pillow.
- Avoid using soft objects, stuffed toys, loose bedding and blankets in the crib.
- Keep your baby's shots current by keeping your well-baby appointments.
- The best thing you can give your baby is breast milk. Breast is Best!
- Do not expose your baby to second hand smoke.

For More Information about the Black Infant Health Practice Initiative (BIHPI)

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Black Infant Health Practice Initiative

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