



Date: August 23, 2015

Healthy Sunday Topic: Protecting Our Children



According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Care, African-American women experience worse birth outcomes than any other major ethnic group, by far. According to data collected, black infants are between two-and-a-half to three times more likely to die within their first year than white infants, due largely to premature birth, low birth weight or birth defects. It's a disparity that's existed as long as health officials have kept statistics, and it's both troubling to know this.

What Can You Do?

By taking action on health issues before pregnancy, many future problems for the mother and baby can be prevented. It is important for all women of reproductive age (between 18yrs and 44yrs) to adopt healthy behaviors such as—

- Taking folic acid – folic acid prevents neural tube birth defects
- Maintaining a healthy diet and weight.
- Being physically active regularly.
- Quitting tobacco use.
- Not drinking excessive amounts of alcohol and using illegal drugs
- Talking to your health care provider about screening and proper management of chronic diseases.
- Talking with your health care provider about taking any medications.
- Visiting your health care provider at the recommended scheduled time periods for your age and discuss if or when you are considering becoming pregnant.
- Using effective contraception correctly and consistently if you are sexually active, but wish to delay or avoid pregnancy.
- Preventing injuries and considering the safety of your home and family (e.g., wear seat belt, take CPR, install and test smoke alarms).
- Get tested for Sickle Cell Anemia (for more information about Sickle Cell Anemia contact Elaine Whitworth from Bridges at Elaine.whitworth@icloud.com and Sickle Cell Centers at Duke and UNC-CH)

Sean E. McLean, MD. Assistant Professor of Pediatric Surgery at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill says, “The statistics on infant mortality and disparities related to premature birth, low birth weight, and birth defects for African Americans are real. The recommendations provided in this health tip must be followed to give your baby the best chance to start his or her life on a solid foundation as it relates to their health. If you are a woman of child bearing age, make sure that you have a discussion with your primary care or women’s health practitioner prior to conceiving. The best way to give birth to a healthy baby is to be healthy mom!”



Sean E. McLean, MD



Remember Your ABCs

- **A**lways eat a well-balanced diet with a multivitamin supplement and exercise regularly
- **B**efore trying to conceive, learn about your family history (some illness are inherited), and If you have pre- existing health conditions, discuss your desire for attempting pregnancy with your healthcare provider first; then, follow your healthcare provider’s recommendations
- **C**autions: Stop smoking; do not drink alcohol while trying to conceive and after conceiving; seek prenatal care early; check your blood pressure regularly; and check for gestational diabetes.

For More Information:

- American SIDS Institute (800) 232-7437
- www.womenshealth.gov/pregnancy
- www.nchealthystart.org
- www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/bd/abc.htm
- www.marachofdimes.com

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