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Health Sunday Topic: Infant & Maternal Health

Remember Your ABCs to help ensure a healthy outcome for your pregnancy?

- **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**autious: Stop smoking; do not drink alcohol while trying to conceive; seek prenatal care early.

It's never too early to start planning for a healthy pregnancy!

Concerns

Disparities in Maternal and Infant Health

Infant mortality: (Infant mortality refers to a baby who was born alive, but died before reaching his or her first birthday. The infant mortality rate is often used to measure the overall health of a community.) Whites have the lowest infant mortality rate (6.0 deaths per 1,000 live births) versus a rate of 13.5 deaths per 1,000 live births for all minorities (2008). The greatest racial/ethnic disparity exists between whites and African Americans.

Source: **Healthy North Carolina 2020: A Better State of Health. 2011**

There has been an increase in infant mortality rates for both whites and minorities. In 2009, 37 infants died in Durham County, 21 of which were minorities and 16 of which were white. The minority infant death rate in Durham is 11.5 per 1,000 and the white infant death rate is 6.2 per 1,000. There continues to be a significant racial disparity in infant mortality, as over half of infant deaths in Durham between 2005 and 2009 happened in African American families.

Source: **Partnership for a Healthy Durham: 2011 Community Health Assessment**

Women who are planning to become pregnant should visit their healthcare provider to have preconception counseling, a physical examination and laboratory studies performed. Counseling and testing for genetic disorders may be recommended prior to attempts at conceiving.



Recommendations can be made for a healthy diet, exercise program, smoking and alcohol cessation, medication adjustments, as well as nutritional supplements.



Maria Small, MD, MPH from Duke OB/GYN/Maternal and Fetal Division states: *“It’s never too early to start planning for a healthy pregnancy!* Every mother and father wants a happy and healthy baby. Consider these tips for preparing for your bundle of joy.”

Maria Small, MD, MPH

- Choose a pediatrician, and ask important questions about vaccinations, frequency of visits, and what to do in case of an emergency.
- Decide whether you are going to breastfeed or use formula. There are many benefits to baby and mother when breastfeeding.
- Prepare your home and surroundings. Make sure you have a child safety seat for your car, a crib, plenty of diapers (about 70 per week), and newborn clothing. It is also a good idea to prepare an infant medical kit. These items would be a good baseline for the kit: infant nail clippers, suction bulb for nose, non-aspirin liquid pain reliever for infants, and rectal thermometer.



Dr. Small further states, “After achieving pregnancy, early initiation of prenatal care is recommended to confirm and maintain a healthy gestation. A complete prenatal history will help your healthcare provider identify any risk factors for the pregnancy. Pregnancy is an opportunity to improve long term health for baby and mother. Even if a mother has complications during pregnancy, it can be an opportunity to reduce long term risk for her and baby in developing problems like diabetes, obesity and heart disease.”

Benefits of Breastfeeding your baby:

- Babies who are breastfed have fewer documented cases of ear infections, skin problems, and hospitalizations.
- Breastfeeding helps moms 1) return to pre-pregnancy health status and weight, and reduces her chances of diabetes and many types of cancer, including breast cancer, and of postpartum depression; 2) bond with baby; and 3) is free.

For more information, please refer to the following:

American SIDS Institute (800) 232-7437

• www.womenshealth.gov/pregnancy

• www.nchealthystart.org

• www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/bd/abc.htm

• www.marchofdimes.com

A Message from your Community Health Coalition in Association with the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Durham & Vicinity, NC Mutual Life Insurance Company, Central Carolina Black Nurses’ Council Inc. and Durham Regional Hospital.

REMEMBER: Healthy People 2020 – A Clear Vision to Healthy Living!