

# BUMP AND BEYOND

*Cobb & Douglas Public Health Pregnancy Newsletter*



## Advocating for Yourself During Pregnancy

During pregnancy, it is important that YOU are a member of your health care team. Your thoughts, concerns, and decisions regarding you and your baby’s care need to be heard. Speaking up for and advocating for yourself is not being pushy, it is your right.

About 700 women in the U.S. die each year as a result of pregnancy or its complications. Black and American Indian/Alaska Native are 2 to 3 times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than white women.

Unfortunately, in prenatal care today, women’s thoughts, feelings, and choices can be disregarded and dismissed. Because of this, the health of pregnant women and their unborn babies can be put at risk.

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Being proactive is one of the best things you can do to make sure your voice is heard during your pregnancy. There are some things you can do to advocate for yourself.

### Take notes and track data at your prenatal appointments

When your doctor takes measurements and tracks data, make sure you write them down as well. Pay attention and ask about anything you do not understand. Keep tracking data even when you are home. For example, counting your baby's movements. You can provide this information to your doctor at your next prenatal appointment. If anything concerns you or something does not feel right, speak up!

### Educate yourself by taking a birth class

Taking a birth class is a great way to prepare for pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period. Having this knowledge will help you to feel more confident when advocating for yourself.

### Ask a LOT of questions!

Arrive at your prenatal appointments with questions. Write them down when you think of them at home or elsewhere, so you won't forget to ask them when you go to your appointments. Do not be afraid to ask questions. Your doctor should welcome all of your questions. The more you know about what is going on in your pregnancy, the better!

### Do not hesitate to speak up

There are steps you can take to make sure your provider is listening to you if you are not being heard.

If you are feeling anxious or distressed about something, make sure your provider understands what you are feeling even if they say everything is okay. If you know that when you get home, you will still be uneasy and worried even though your doctor said everything was okay, stop and tell your doctor you are not reassured, and something does not feel right.

If your concerns are still being dismissed, it is a good idea to send concerns or questions through an electronic message since these will remain a part of your permanent medical record. There is a chance that verbal concerns and questions may never be documented. Using an electronic form of communication shows your provider how serious you are about your concerns.

Remember, you do not have to stay with the same provider throughout your entire pregnancy. If your provider is dismissive and not responsive to your concerns, you can leave. You deserve a provider who you can trust and who respects you and your intuition.

In self-advocacy, remain respectful and kind, but be firm and persistent at the same time. Remember, you are a good parent for making sure you are receiving the best care for you and your baby.

#### Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/disparities-pregnancy-related-deaths/Infographic-disparities-pregnancy-related-deaths-h.pdf>

<https://www.pushpregnancy.org/advocating-for-yourself>

<https://mommylabornurse.com/self-advocate-during-birth/>

# Premature Birth

Preterm birth is a leading cause of infant mortality and affects 1 out of every 10 infants born in the United States. It occurs when a baby is born too early, before 37 weeks of pregnancy is complete. Babies that survive can experience short and long-term health problems which can include developmental delays, vision and hearing impairment, and chronic respiratory problems.

## The cause of preterm birth

Preterm birth can occur for many reasons; however, sometimes the reason is unknown. Some factors associated with preterm birth are:

- Being a teenager or over the age of 35
- Being African American
- Having a low income
- Having a prior preterm birth
- Infection
- Carrying more than one baby
- Tobacco and substance use
- Stress
- Having a chronic condition such as diabetes or high blood pressure

## Preventing preterm birth

Because of the many causes of preterm birth, prevention it is challenging. There are some important steps a pregnant woman, can take to reduce their risk of preterm birth:

- Get prenatal care as soon as possible
- Quit smoking
- Avoid alcohol and drugs
- Seek medical care for any symptoms of preterm labor
- Talk with your doctor about progesterone treatment if you had a previous preterm birth

## Caring for a premature baby

A premature baby may weigh 5 pounds or even less. The earlier your baby arrives, the smaller she/he will be. Because of this, your baby's head will seem large compared their body. Your baby will also have less fat, which will cause their skin to look thinner and transparent. You may be able to see blood vessels under the skin.

Because your premature baby will have less fat, she/he will become cold in normal room temperatures. After birth, your baby will be placed in an incubator or under a radiant warmer to ensure they remain warm, and your baby will probably be moved to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

Premature babies are born with immature respiratory systems and may have trouble breathing. Their cries may be very soft, if they cry at all. If your baby is born more than two months early, breathing difficulties can cause serious health problems due to their other immature organs not receiving enough oxygen. To make sure this does not happen, your baby will be under the close observation of doctors who are watching the breathing and heart rate of your baby. If needed, your baby will be given extra oxygen to help them breathe.

Having a preterm baby can be stressful. Because of the special care your baby needs after birth, you may miss the opportunity of holding, bonding, and breastfeeding your baby right after delivery. Make sure to ask to see your baby as soon as you can after delivery and be as active as you can in their care. Here are some things you can do to participate in your baby's care:

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- Spend as much time as possible with your baby even if you can't hold them yet, and touch your baby often if skin-to-skin care is allowed.
- Feed your baby as soon as the doctor says it is okay. Even if your baby cannot nurse yet, you can pump your breastmilk for feeding through a tube or bottle.
- Become familiar with your baby's routine care in the NICU, such as changing your baby's diaper, taking a temperature, giving a bath, tucking in blankets, and ask to participate in providing that care.
- Ask to be present during procedures and learn about common terms, phrases, and problems you hear in and around the NICU.

It is important to know you are not alone if your baby arrives early. Your own pediatrician will be informed about your baby's care and may also participate in it. The nurses caring for your baby in the NICU will help you become confident in providing care for your baby. Do not feel nervous about asking for help or asking to help. They will provide guidance and be able to answer your questions.

**From: All of Us  
To: All of You**



**Happy New Year!  
2023**



**Sources:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pretermbirth.htm>

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/preterm-birth>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/Pages/Caring-For-A-Premature-Baby.aspx>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/Pages/How-You-Can-Participate-in-the-Care-of-Your-Baby-in-the-NICU.asp>

## Rewards & Incentives

### Customer Satisfaction Surveys

With Healthy Start, all participants are **Winners!** However, we want to extend a special congratulations to our recent raffle winners for their participation with completing their Customer Satisfaction Surveys.

***Congratulations to the winner of our November gift card raffle drawing. D. Lawrence will receive a \$25 gift card of appreciation!!***

As each of you communicate monthly with your care team, you should be given the opportunity to complete a survey; not only as a chance to be entered into our monthly drawing, but also, and most importantly, for you to be able to provide feedback on your experience with our programming/services and to let us know how we can improve. All that is required to be entered into the raffle is that you send confirmation of your completed survey to your Healthy Start Nurse or Care Coordinator within the month that you receive it, and your name can be entered. Please note that you do not have to participate in the raffle drawing and may complete surveys anonymously, if you prefer.



### Client Referrals

We are also now offering gift cards as referral incentives for other eligible pregnant women you refer to our program. To qualify for this incentive, the referred woman must fully complete the enrollment process and subsequently keep her next scheduled appointment. Please let a member of your care team know if you have a friend or family member who may qualify for our program.

## Events & Classes

### • **Stork's Nest**

Our local Stork's Nest is offering **free**, app-based learning modules for prenatal education classes. Earn a \$10 gift card per module! Register at <https://tinyurl.com/36k55u56> using Rho Xi Zeta for question 4.

### • **Pickles & Ice Cream**

Pickles & Ice Cream offers free, live webinars covering prenatal, postpartum, breastfeeding, and newborn care. To view class dates and times, visit:

<https://picklesandicecreamga.org/events>.

### • **Healthy Start Support Group**

CDPH's Healthy Start Program launched a virtual support group for moms, led by a therapist. Whether you're expecting or recently had your baby, you are welcome to attend. The group meets Tuesday evenings from 6:00 - 7:30pm and Friday afternoons from 1:00 - 2:30pm. To join the Zoom call, use this link:

<https://zoom.us/j/2925874010>.

### • **Healthy Start CAN Meeting**

Save the Date - January 19, 2023.

### • **Inspiring Fathers Program**

Inspiring Fathers is a program for individuals who support a mom in Healthy Start. We want to prepare fathers, partners or other support figures for the mental, spiritual and emotional responsibility of being actively involved in the child's life.

The program includes a 12-week course that will teach the tools to care for the financial and emotional stability of your family. Topics will cover issues such as job training, housing assistance, self-esteem, relationship building and parenting skills. Dads meet once a week over a hot meal as we help you build a safe, strong home life for your child. Contact 770-635-0523 to get more information and register.



**Healthy  
Start**



**Inspiring  
Fathers**

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