

Join the Fight Against Infant Mortality!

The Problem

Each year in Milwaukee there are an average of 200 infant deaths and stillbirths. Many of these deaths are preventable. In 2008 the overall infant mortality rate for Milwaukee was 10.7 deaths per 1,000 live births, but there are stark disparities hidden within that number. The infant mortality rate among African-Americans was 13.9, compared to a non-Hispanic white rate of 4.8.¹ In the 2007 Big Cities Health Inventory, Milwaukee ranks 47th worst out of 53 large U.S. cities in infant mortality rates and ranks even more poorly in the disparity between blacks and whites². The U.S. ranks 30th worst out of 31 industrialized nations in babies dying before their first birthday, behind Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, and Israel³. Over the past 10 years, there has been virtually no improvement in infant mortality rates in Milwaukee. Infant mortality is a public health crisis in Milwaukee.

What Can I Do?

Every one of us can play a role in fighting infant mortality. We can:

1. Ensure That Every Woman Has a Healthy Pregnancy.

The leading cause of African American infant deaths is from Preterm Birth and Low Birth Weight-related disorders.² There are many reasons that babies are born early and small, but we can help by:

- Being kind to pregnant women (<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/mch/Attachments/SS2004/kindness.pdf>)
- Encouraging women to see a health care provider EARLY (http://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/preconception_care.cfm)
- Telling pregnant women about Journey of a Lifetime, a support program just for them (<http://www.facebook.com/abcforhealthyfamilies>)
- Help pregnant women deal with stress during pregnancy by texting "NoStress" to 32075

2. Learn About Safe Sleep!

The second leading cause of infant deaths is from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)², which can sometimes be related to unsafe sleep situations for infants.

- To learn more about safe sleep, visit: http://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/Sudden_Infant_Death_Syndrome.cfm

3. Take action to change the societal and environmental issues that can impact a woman's pregnancy.

- Support the Milwaukee Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families Initiative (<http://milwaukee-lihf.wikispaces.com/>)

Where Can I Learn More?

- The Milwaukee Health Department: <http://www.milwaukee.gov/WomenandChildHealth23777/InfantMortality.htm>
- A list of Wisconsin allies in the fight: <http://www.cuph.org/projects/birth-outcome-disparities-catalog/>
- The Wisconsin Department of Health Services' Statewide Advisory Committee on Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Birth Outcomes: <http://www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/healthybirths/>
- The Wisconsin Partnership Program's Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families: <http://www.med.wisc.edu/partnership/lifecourse-initiative-for-healthy-families/502>

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References

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- ²*Big Cities Health Inventory: The Health of Urban America, 2007*, National Association of County and City Health Officials, Benbow, N., editor. Washington, DC. 2007.
- ³MacDorman MF & Mathews TJ. Behind international rankings of infant mortality: How the United States compares with Europe. *National Center for Health Statistics Data Brief, 23*. 2009. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db23.pdf>.