

Join the Fight Against Infant Mortality!

The Problem

Wisconsin, a state that ranks high in the overall health of its population, has one of the worst rates of infant mortality among African Americans in the country.¹ In the City of Milwaukee, the number of infants who die within their first year is higher than the number of homicides.^{2,3} While infant mortality affects all racial groups, it tends to disproportionately affect African American infants. In some parts of Milwaukee, African American babies are at the same risk of dying as babies born in Albania, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.^{4,5} African American babies in Racine, Kenosha and Beloit fare just as poorly.² Infant mortality is most commonly measured using the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), which is the number of infant deaths per 1,000 births in a population.

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 women⁶
- Encouraging women to see a health care provider EARLY (visit: http://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/preconception_care.cfm)

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

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/>

References

¹ United Health Foundation. (2008). *America's Health Rankings 2008*, <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/2008/index.html>, accessed 8/31/09.

² Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services, DPH, BHIP. Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health (WISH) data query system, http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/wish/main/inf_mort/inf_mort_home.htm, Infant Mortality Module, accessed 01/12/09.

³ City of Milwaukee COMPASS Query and Download Module, <http://www.milwaukee.gov/PublicApplications13176.htm>, accessed 2/24/09.

⁴ Chen, H-Y, Mori, N., Bergstrom, J.P., Cisler, R.A., Baumgardner, D.J. (2009). Milwaukee Health Report 2009: Health Disparities in Milwaukee by Socioeconomic Status. Center for Urban Population Health and City of Milwaukee Health Department, <http://www.cuph.org/mhr/>, accessed 8/31/09.

⁵ Central Intelligence Agency 2008 World Fact Book. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2091rank.html>, accessed 02/12/09.

⁶ Florida Department of Health. *101 Intentional Acts of Kindness Toward a Pregnant Woman!*, <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/mch/Attachments/SS2004/kindness.pdf>, accessed 2/12/09.

- 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 Special Initiative on Healthy Birth Outcomes: <http://www.med.wisc.edu/partnership/targeted-initiative-disparities-in-infant-mortality/502>
- The March of Dimes' March for Babies supporting research to reduce preterm births: http://www.marchforbabies.org/s_team_page.asp?Seld=579279&si

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If you'd like to be updated on efforts in the fight against infant mortality, email us at salmward@wisc.edu with "Join the Fight" in the subject line, and include your name and contact information.

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