

Center for Urban Population Health

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL INFANT MORTALITY AWARENESS MONTH

2009

To recognize the impact that infant mortality continues to have in the United States, September has been declared **National Infant Mortality Awareness Month**. Here's what you need to know about infant mortality in our community.

The Facts

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 of life 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.

Causes of Milwaukee Infant Deaths

The overall Infant Mortality Rate in Milwaukee decreased from 2007 (the most recent data available via the WDHS) to 2006 with IMRs of 9.8 and 12.3, respectively. However, there was an increase in Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), Sudden Unexpected Death in an Infant (SUID), and entrapment deaths, accounting for 15% of 2006 deaths and 28.8% of 2007 deaths.⁶

During the time period of 2003 to 2007, the leading cause of death for African American Milwaukee infants was Preterm Birth and Low Birth Weight-related disorders, accounting for 30.7% of infant deaths, and the 2nd leading cause of death was SIDS (14.0%).² The leading cause of death for White Milwaukee infants was SIDS, accounting for 19.8% of infant deaths, and the 2nd leading cause of death was congenital malformations (14.2%).²

If Preterm Birth and Low Birth Weight babies do survive, the odds are still stacked against them: in 2005, the average Medicaid charges for a normal weight baby were \$4,321 in its first year of life, while they were \$150,000 for Low Birth Weight babies (for Dane, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Racine and Rock counties).⁷ Further, the prevalence of Children with Special Health Care Needs in the City of Milwaukee was almost double that of surrounding areas, the state, and the nation in 2004.⁸

What is being done about it?

The Center for Urban Population Health collaborates with numerous partners on several levels to address factors affecting infant mortality, including:

- Leading and supporting research initiatives
 - [Milwaukee Health Report](#)
 - [Assessing the prevalence of Children with Special Health Care Needs in Milwaukee](#)
 - [Identifying risk factors of repeat teen pregnancies](#)
 - [Investigating the possible complication of infections in pregnancy](#)
 - Young Parenthood Program
 - [Assisting in identifying a goal to reduce teen pregnancy](#)
 - [Providing seed funding for the academic partner of the Racine Fetal and Infant Mortality Review](#)
 - [Providing seed funding for the study of postpartum depression](#)
- Evaluation of Existing Grants/Programs
 - UW Teen Pregnancy Evaluation
 - [Group Prenatal Care for Vulnerable Teens](#)

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- [Safe Mom, Safe Baby](#)
- City of Milwaukee Nurse Family Partnership Program
- Data Management & Support
 - [PeriData.Net®](#)
 - Linking birth/death records for the Milwaukee Health Department
- Coordination/Communication
 - Maintaining a [Catalog of initiatives Addressing Birth Outcomes](#)
 - Participating as members in taskforces/workgroups
 - [Health Care Task Force on Pre- and Inter-Conception Care](#)
 - [The Wisconsin Department of Health Services' Statewide Advisory Committee on Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Birth Outcomes](#)
 - [Wisconsin Partnership Fund's Oversight and Advisory Committee Healthy Birth Outcomes Steering Committee](#)
 - [Milwaukee Health Department's Fetal and Infant Mortality Review](#)
 - [Healthy Babies Summit Planning Committee](#)
 - [Partnership to Eliminate Disparities in Infant Mortality Action Learning Collaborative](#)

What can others do about it?

Every one of us can play a role in combating infant mortality by

- *Ensuring that every woman has a healthy pregnancy.*
The leading cause of African American infant deaths is from Preterm Birth and Low Birth Weight-related disorders². There are many reasons that babies are born early and small, but we can help by:
 - [Being kind to pregnant women](#)
 - [Encouraging women to see a health care provider EARLY](#)
- *Learning 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

To learn more about efforts to combat infant mortality in our community, visit:

- [The Milwaukee Health Department](#)
- [Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#)
- [Wisconsin Partnership Fund's Targeted Initiative on Healthy Birth Outcomes](#)
- [The Office of Minority Health](#)

For more information, contact:

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References

¹ United Health Foundation. (2008). [America's Health Rankings 2008](#).

² Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services, DPH, BHIP, [Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health \(WISH\) data query system, Infant Mortality Module](#).

³ [City of Milwaukee COMPASS Query and Download Module](#).

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⁴ Chen, H.Y., Baumgardner, D.J., Bergstrom, J.P., Mori, N., Swain, G.R., & Cisler, R.A. (2009). [Milwaukee Health Report 2009: Health Disparities in Milwaukee by Socioeconomic Status](#). Center for Urban Population Health: Milwaukee, WI.

⁵ Central Intelligence Agency. (2008). [The World Fact Book](#).

⁶ [Milwaukee Health Department](#).

⁷ Katcher, M.L. & Onheiber, P.M. (2008). [Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Wisconsin Birth Outcomes: Data Trends, Evidence Base, and Best Practices](#). Wisconsin Division of Public Health (February).

⁸ Partington, S., Cisler, R., & Blair, K. (2006). [Prevalence of Children with Special Health Care Needs in Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Data from the Milwaukee Metropolitan Statistical Area](#). *Wisconsin Medical Journal*, 105(3), 30-35.

The Center for Urban Population Health is a partnership among the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Aurora Health Care, Inc. Our mission is advancing population health research and education to improve the health of urban communities.