Healthy Babies through Healthy Families
Take Care of Yourself So You Can Take Care of Your Family.

JOURNEY of a LIFETIME
Healthy Babies through Healthy Families
Healty Babies Need Healthy Moms

Pregnancy is the journey of a lifetime for both you and your baby. Whether you’re thinking about becoming pregnant or you’re already pregnant — there are things you can do so your baby arrives healthy and full of life.

Did you know that African-American women are more likely than other women to have a premature (before 37 weeks) or low birth weight (less than 5 ½ lbs) baby? These babies risk a lifetime of health problems — or even early death. In Wisconsin, African-American infants die before seeing their first birthday at three to four times the rate of white infants. That’s a huge and tragic gap.

A major reason for premature births is stress — many African-American mothers spend so much time taking care of their families that their own health comes last. Try to find a little time each day to take care of yourself.

The demands of pregnancy or a new baby can add a layer of stress that leads to loneliness and depression. Reach out to trusted family and friends. Talk about your feelings. Find a friend from your church. Find community members that can provide support (see the list later in this brochure). Share your story. All this can help you manage your stress and support a healthier pregnancy.
THE JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME: TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER PREGNANCY

THE JOURNEY BEFORE PREGNANCY

• Get a checkup. It’s the first step to getting proper care.

• Before you become pregnant, take prenatal vitamins with folic acid. They’ll keep your body strong and reduce the chances for birth defects.

• Try to quit smoking, alcohol and drug use so your baby has the best possible home inside you from the beginning.

• Going to the dentist is important. Gum disease in pregnant women can harm their babies.

• Keep your body safe. Sex without a condom can lead to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Some have no symptoms and can damage your body without your knowing it.

• Ask your provider if they offer group prenatal care, such as Centering Pregnancy.

THE JOURNEY DURING PREGNANCY

• Start prenatal care as soon as you know you’re pregnant. Make sure it includes screening for birth defects.

• If you have long-term conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes, ask your provider about how best to take care of yourself during pregnancy.

• STDs can be harmful to your baby during pregnancy. Be sure to get tested for HIV/AIDS and other STDs during your pregnancy.

• Get the support you need to deal with your stress. Reach out. Find a support group of other women to talk to and get advice from (see list at the end of this brochure).
THE JOURNEY AFTER (AND BEFORE YOUR NEXT) PREGNANCY

• Wait at least 18 months from delivery before getting pregnant, so your body has time to build itself back up.

• Plan ahead for your next pregnancy, and use birth control until you’re ready to get pregnant again.

• If you’ve had a premature or low birth weight baby, you face a high risk for having another one. Be sure to see your health care provider between pregnancies so your next baby has the best chance for being born healthy.

• Ask your provider about newborn screening to keep your baby healthy.

• Breastfeeding gives babies the best nutrition they need at the beginning and helps prevent them from getting diseases. It also helps you lose weight!

• Always put your baby to sleep on its back and in a crib next to your bed.

THE JOURNEY FORWARD

• Children do best when both parents play a role in their lives. Make time for both parents to be actively involved in child rearing.

• If you find yourself in a violent relationship, protect yourself and your baby – reach out for help.

• Make sure to take prescribed medications and go in for regular check-ups between pregnancies.

• Keep up with healthy eating and regular exercise. It’s important to lose all your pregnancy weight.
I don’t know what the future may hold, but I know who holds the future.

Dr. Ralph Abernathy
Civil Rights Pioneer 1926–1990
ALL ALONG THE JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME

EAT WELL & EXERCISE
Being overweight or underweight before or during your pregnancy can cause problems for moms and babies. Good nutrition and being active can help you control your weight. Your body will be stronger and healthier — in addition to being a better home for your baby. If you’re pregnant, food feeds the two of you. Healthy eating leads to healthy babies:

• Say “no” to grease. Choose grilled or baked foods.

• Get fresh! Add fresh or frozen vegetables to your meals and use herbs and spices.

• Limit salad dressing, mayonnaise, butter and other high-fat condiments. Get low-fat or fat-free versions.

• Use whole-grain pasta and breads to give your body more nutrients to function best.

• Drink lots of water and get enough sleep.

• Exercise is another way to build a healthy body. It makes you look and feel beautiful and helps beat stress. Your doctor can tell you what’s best for you.
AVOID DRUGS, ALCOHOL & CIGARETTES

Toxic chemicals from drugs, alcohol and cigarettes — whether you’re pregnant or not — can affect you and your baby for your entire lives. It’s best to limit your alcohol, and if you’re pregnant, stay away from it completely. You should always keep away from drugs. If you think you might be addicted to drugs or alcohol, you can get help. See the contact information at the end of this brochure. You’ll be keeping your baby safe.

Don’t allow smoking around you while you’re pregnant or around your baby after birth. If you smoke — try quitting or smoking less. Try to find healthier alternatives to smoking. Need help quitting? Call the quit line for free help: 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

DEMAND ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

You have the right to quality medical care — for both yourself and for your baby. But sometimes you have to stand up for it. Insist on quality health care. Write your questions down before your visit and be sure to leave with answers. Demand medical care that’s affordable, convenient, responsive and understandable.
LOOKING FOR HELP?

Once you decide to start a family, many places can give you information and provide support that can help you become a happier, less stressed you. Less stress can help you have a healthier baby. Help is all around you:

- CALL the Maternal and Child Health Hotline for the services you need: 1-800-722-2295.
- TEXT NoStress to 32075 – you’ll receive a text back with places to go for help or more information.
- CONTACT these other resources.

**MILWAUKEE**

City of Milwaukee Health Department
Home Visiting Programs/WIC
1639 S. 23rd St.
Milwaukee, WI 53204
414-286-8620
www.milwaukee.gov/health

Support Circles for Mothers and Fathers
Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center
Daniela Matthews
1531 W. Vliet St.
Milwaukee, WI 53205
414-344-5600
daniela.matthews@milwcnty.com

New Concept Self Development Center
Nancy Hahn
1531 W. Vliet St.
Milwaukee, WI 53205
414-344-5788
nancyhahn@ncsdinc.org

**RACINE**

Martin Luther King Jr.
Community Center
Daryl Carter
1134 Dr. Martin Luther King Dr.
 Racine, WI 53404-3050
262-636-9237

City of Racine Health Department
Racine Healthy Births Healthy Families Program
City of Racine Health Dept. City Hall, Room 106
730 Washington Ave.
Racine, WI 53403
262-636-9505

The Milwaukee Urban League
Shirley Sharp
435 W. North Avenue
Milwaukee WI 53212
414-374-5850 ext. 133
ssharp@tmul.org

Milwaukee Health Services, Inc.
Jill Denson jdenson@mhsl.org
Clinics:
Martin Luther King Jr. Heritage Health Center
2555 N. Dr. MLK Dr.
Milwaukee, WI 53212
414-372-8080

Isaac Goggs Heritage Health Center
8200 W. Silver Spring Dr.
Milwaukee, WI 53218
414-760-3900

Nutrition, Fitness and Support Circles
for Mothers and Fathers
YMCA – Park Lawn
Julie Dixon-Borum
4340 N. 46th St.
Milwaukee, WI 53216-1413
414-873-9622
jborum@ymcamke.org
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