



# 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

## HEALTHY 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.
- VISIT [myspace.com/JourneyofaLifetime](http://myspace.com/JourneyofaLifetime) on the Web.
- CONTACT these other resources.

## 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

## MILWAUKEE

**City of Milwaukee Health Department  
Home Visiting Programs/WIC**

1639 S. 23rd St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53204  
414-286-8620  
[www.milwaukee.gov/health](http://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](mailto:daniela.matthews@milwcnty.com)

**New Concept Self Development Center  
Nancy Hahn**

1531 W. Vliet St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53205  
414-344-5788  
[nancyhahn@ncsdc-inc.org](mailto:nancyhahn@ncsdc-inc.org)

**The Milwaukee Urban League  
Shirley Sharp**

435 W. North Avenue  
Milwaukee WI 53212  
414-374-5850 ext. 133  
[ssharp@tmul.org](mailto:ssharp@tmul.org)

**Milwaukee Health Services, Inc.  
Jill Denson** [jdenson@mhsi.org](mailto:jdenson@mhsi.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](mailto:jborum@ymcamke.org)





**JOURNEY** of a **LIFETIME**  
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