

Working Together to Reduce Black Maternal Mortality

Black Maternal Health Week is recognized each year from April 11-17 to bring attention and action in improving Black maternal health. Everyone can play a role in working to prevent pregnancy-related deaths and improving maternal health outcomes.

Most Pregnancy-Related Deaths are Preventable

Each year in the United States, about 700 people die during pregnancy or in the year after. Another 50,000 people each year have unexpected outcomes of labor and delivery with serious short- or long-term health consequences. Every pregnancy-related death is tragic, especially because two in three of them are preventable. Recognizing urgent maternal warning signs and providing timely treatment and quality care can prevent many pregnancy-related deaths.

Racial Disparities Exist

Black women are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than White women. Multiple factors contribute to these disparities, such as variation in quality healthcare, underlying chronic conditions, structural racism, and implicit bias. Social determinants of health prevent many people from racial and ethnic minority groups from having fair opportunities for economic, physical, and emotional health.

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During Black Maternal Health Week and throughout the year, learn how you can support pregnant people in your life to reduce factors that contribute to pregnancy-related complications and death.

Pregnant People and Their Families Can:

- **Talk to a healthcare provider** if anything doesn't feel right or is concerning.
- **Know and seek immediate care** if experiencing any of the [urgent maternal warning signs](#), including severe headache, extreme swelling of hands or face, trouble breathing, heavy vaginal bleeding or discharge, overwhelming tiredness, and more. These symptoms could indicate a potentially life-threatening complication.
- **Document and share pregnancy history** during each medical care visit for up to one year after delivery.
- **Maintain ongoing healthcare and social support systems** before, during, and after pregnancy.

Healthcare Providers Can:

- **Ask questions** to better understand their patient and things that may be affecting their lives.
- **Help patients**, and those accompanying them, understand the [urgent maternal warning signs](#) and when to seek medical attention right away.
- **Help patients manage chronic conditions** or conditions that may arise during pregnancy like [hypertension](#), [diabetes](#), or [depression](#).
- **Recognize unconscious bias** in themselves and in their office.
- **Address any concerns** patients may have.
- **Provide all patients** with respectful care.

Hospitals and Healthcare Systems Can:

- **Identify and address [unconscious bias in healthcare](#).**
- **Standardize coordination of care** and response to emergencies.
- **Improve delivery of [quality prenatal and postpartum care](#).**
- **Train non-obstetric care providers** to ask about pregnancy history in the preceding year.

States and Communities Can:

- **Assess and coordinate** delivery hospitals for [risk-appropriate care](#).
- **Support [review of the causes behind every maternal death](#).**
- **Identify and address [social factors](#)** influencing maternal health such as unstable housing, transportation access, food insecurity, substance use, violence, and racial and economic inequality.

Resources

- [National Maternal Mental Health Hotline](#) The toll-free hotline is accessible by phone or text at **1-833-9-HELP4MOMS (1-833-943-5746)** in English and Spanish. TTY Users can use a preferred relay service or dial 711 and then 1-833-943-5746. The hotline offers confidential mental health support for expecting and new moms experiencing mental health challenges. Those who contact the hotline can receive a range of support, including brief interventions from trained counselors who are culturally and trauma-informed, as well as referrals to both community-based and telehealth providers as needed. Callers also will receive evidence-based information and referrals to support groups and other community resources.
- [Webinar: Honoring Black Maternal Health Week – A Discussion of Challenges and Opportunities](#)
- [Documentary: Aftershock](#) Following the preventable deaths of their loved ones due to childbirth complications, two families galvanize activists, birth-workers and physicians to reckon with one of the most pressing American crises of our time – the US maternal health crisis.
- [Podcast: Therapy for Black Girls – Session 255 – Honoring Black Maternal Health Week with NATAL](#)
- [5 Podcasts You Need to Listen to Centering Black Maternal Health!](#)
- [Sisters in Loss](#) Podcast and blog.
- [What Drives Black Maternal Health Inequities in the U.S.](#)
- [Infographic: Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Pregnancy-Related Deaths — United States, 2007–2016](#)
- [Maternal Morbidity & Mortality Web Portal](#)
- [Black Mama's Matter Alliance \(BMMA\) | Advancing Black Maternal Health, Rights & Justice](#)
- [Shades of Blue Project](#) Focusing on maternal mental health by helping black and brown women before, during and after child-birth with community resources, mental health advocacy, and treatment. Includes online support groups.
- [Every Mother Counts | Black Maternal Health Resource List](#) A brief list of information and resources related to racism and the black maternal health crisis in the US.
- [The Birth Hour | Resources and Support for Black Maternal Health](#)

Source: Health Equity, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Working Together to Reduce Black Maternal Mortality. Retrieved December 6, 2022, from CDC.gov.