

READ, LEARN, GROW



EVERY CHILD
DESERVES A CHAMPION

Safe Sleep and Community Support Can Reduce Infant Mortality in Buncombe County

In our county and throughout the United States, too many infants die before their 1st birthday. In Buncombe, we have seen a recent spike with 13 infants dying in 2012 and by 2013 the number increased to 27, making our infant death rate even higher than the state and national averages. And the numbers are worse for African American babies. The good news is that there are steps we can take to change this trend.



Cynthia Yancey, MD

Buncombe County Health and Human Services

What can parents do to protect their babies from early death?

We know that babies born with a healthy weight do better. Low birth weight is linked to mother's who during pregnancy have a poor diet, smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs or substances.

A pregnant woman should also get early prenatal care to find and treat any infections that may cause premature labor. Once their baby is born, parents (including dads) should be their healthiest selves with nutrition and exercise and not smoke, drink or use drugs.

Why is safe sleep so important?

Safe sleep matters. By following babies who have died from SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) we know what contributes to these deaths. The tricky part is that these new ways of putting babies to sleep are very different from what our mothers did or taught us.

The safest practices for putting babies to bed are:

- lay a baby on its back to sleep,
- on a firm surface,
- without toys or extra bedding, and
- not overwrapping them in blankets so as to not overheat them

These simple steps are the most important things parents can do to protect their babies from SIDS.

Putting a baby to sleep in the bed with you is not safe. Last year we lost too many babies in Buncombe County due to roll over suffocation.

By following these recommendations for "Back to Sleep" you can

reduce the incidence of SIDS by 50%. We need everyone to help us get the word out on these safe sleep practices.

When you are frustrated with a crying child, what should you do?

Never, never, ever shake a crying baby. It is possible to cause brain damage or death by shaking a baby. If you are frustrated, lie your baby down on its back in its crib or place your baby in a safe place and walk away until you have calmed down.

Under the best of circumstances any parent can become tired and frustrated. All parents can use some help some time. If a parent can't handle crying or doesn't know what to do, they should reach out for help, calling a friend, neighbor or their doctor. You can also call 2-1-1 about parenting support programs in our community at any time of day. Getting support and education helps to buffer the stresses of parenting.

Be sure to call a doctor if you believe you could be depressed.

3 SIMPLE STEPS FOR A SAFE BABY



Place baby on her back to sleep.

NEVER, EVER shake a baby.

Make sure you trust the person with your child.



Frank Castelblanco, RN, DNP



Director, Division of Regional Services, MAHEC

Recently, you gave a presentation to the Buncombe County Health and Human Services Board about infant mortality rates. What is causing these deaths?

To find out what's causing our infant deaths, we look at risk factors including:

- (1) babies with health problems – from babies born too soon or weighing less than 5 pounds,
- (2) mother's health and healthcare before, during and between pregnancies,
- (3) what happens to the baby after it leaves the hospital – accidents, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), abuse and chronic stress and
- (4) social factors like income, race/ethnicity and education.

When we look at whether an equal number of infants die based on race, income or education we find Buncombe is similar to NC and the US. Buncombe has nearly twice as many African American (non-Hispanic) infant deaths compared to White infant deaths.



Jennifer Neilsen

District Administrator, Guardian Ad Litem

Why is a positive support system key for new moms?

A positive support system is essential for new moms because they need to know they are not alone. Let's face it, being a new parent is hard. There is the fatigue, stress, anxiety and loneliness that come with bringing a newborn home.

You have decreased time with friends and co-workers as you care for your little one. Your family may or may not live close by. This support is crucial for moms to make sure they are caring for themselves SO they can take good care of their baby.

Where can parents learn more about child development, safe

sleep for their babies, and how to deal with difficult parenting situations?

The best place to learn more about these topics is your child's pediatrician. They will have the most up to date information. Things have changed since we were children so the information you receive from family members might no longer be what is recommended. Just as Dr. Yancey said, it is now recommended that babies be put to sleep on their backs without anything in the crib with them to decrease the chance of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).

Partnerships in our community are also in place to help parents. Here in Buncombe County, the Community Child Protection Team (CCPT) works to identify gaps and deficiencies in the county's child well-being response, report findings, and develop strategies to address needs to better help connect parents

to appropriate resources.

Partners include Buncombe County Health and Human Services, Guardian Ad Litem, Children's Developmental Service Agencies, Community Action Opportunities, the District Attorney's office, Smoky Mountain LME/MCO, Asheville Police Dept., Sheriff's Dept., Child Abuse Prevention Services, our local Medical Examiner, as well as doctors from MAHEC and Mission Health.

A project called Community Health Improvement Process (CHIP) explores "what works" in our community and work with community partners such as Mt. Zion and the YWCA. You can find out more about this project at buncombecounty.org/CHIP.

For more information, call (828) 250-6006 and visit buncombecounty.org/health

