

ECHO (Enhancing Collaborative Health Options & Opportunities) through HOPE (Hope and Healing Opportunities with Proactive Education)



January is...

Cervical Health Awareness Month
Substance Use Disorder Treatment Month
Thyroid Awareness Month
National Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists Week, January 12-24

MESSAGE FROM MZCD STAFF



Dr. Ronald Caldwell, Kontia Grant, Sapphire De'Bellott, and Barbara Anderson.

One Too Many

Maternal Health Awareness Day is January 23, 2026.

The CDC's national observance highlights the preventable maternal mortality crisis in the US, focusing on leading causes like mental health and cardiac issues, and promoting urgent maternal warning signs, as many deaths occur postpartum and disproportionately affect Black women.

Maternal Health Awareness Day is a call to action for better care, increased awareness, and addressing disparities to improve outcomes for mothers before, during, and after pregnancy. Themes like "Know Why" and "Holding Ground on Maternal Health" emphasize understanding root causes and advocating for change.

Key Focus Areas

Preventable Deaths: Over 80% of maternal deaths are preventable, stressing the need for systemic change.

Leading Causes: Mental health conditions (like depression) and cardiac/coronary issues are top causes, along with hemorrhage.

Postpartum Period: A significant number of deaths happen up to a year after childbirth, highlighting the need for sustained support.

Health Disparities: Maternal mortality disproportionately affects Black and Brown women due to systemic racism.

Source: CDC

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month

The CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities strives to advance the health and well-being of our nation's most vulnerable populations.

Birth defects can happen for many reasons, and not all birth defects can be prevented. There are things you can do to increase the chances of having a healthy pregnancy.

What to Know

Planning for pregnancy includes taking important steps to help you get healthy for yourself and any future children. By making a plan before getting pregnant, you can take steps to a healthier you and baby-to-be. MZCD's Project NAF program has promoted the importance of preconception health care for over 25 years.

Planning for Pregnancy

Talk to your healthcare provider

Before getting pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about your health history and any medical conditions you currently have. Take a list of talking points so you don't forget anything. Be sure to talk about vaccinations, all medicines you take, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, supplements, and vitamins, as well as any lifestyle or behavior concerns.

Get 400 mgs of folic acid daily

Folic acid is a B vitamin. Having enough folic acid in your body at least one month before and during pregnancy can help prevent major birth defects.

Stop drinking alcohol, smoking, and using certain drugs

Drinking alcohol, smoking, and using certain drugs can cause problems during pregnancy, such as premature birth, birth defects, and infant death.



Your health can affect the health of your future baby.

If you cannot stop drinking, smoking, or using drugs, contact your healthcare provider or local alcohol treatment center.

Avoid toxic substances and contaminants

Avoid harmful chemicals, environmental contaminants, and other toxic substances such as synthetic chemicals, some metals, fertilizer, bug spray, and cat or rodent feces. These substances can hurt the reproductive systems of men and women.

Reach and maintain a healthy weight

People who are overweight or obese have a higher risk for many serious conditions, including complications during pregnancy. People who are underweight are also at risk for serious health problems.

Learn your family history

Your family's health history can help you identify factors that might affect your baby or your ability to become pregnant. Based on your family health history, your doctor might refer you for genetic counseling. Other reasons for genetic counseling include having had several miscarriages or infant deaths, having had trouble getting pregnant (infertility), or having a genetic condition or birth defect that occurred during a previous pregnancy.

Get mentally healthy

To be at your best, you need to feel good about your life and value yourself. Everyone feels worried, anxious, sad, or stressed sometimes. However, if these feelings do not go away and interfere with your daily life, get help.

Healthcare professionals can also help with counseling and other support services if you are in a stressful or abusive environment.

Source: CDC

Maternal Health Awareness Day

The 2026 Maternal Health Awareness Day calls for a renewed commitment to prevent preventable maternal deaths, address inequities, and ensure high-quality, evidence-based care for all women before, during, and after childbirth. The initiative emphasizes community-led solutions and policy action, especially given the high rates of maternal mortality in the US, particularly for Black women.

Key Aspects of the Initiative

This year's theme, "Holding Ground on Maternal Health," signifies a steadfast dedication to improving outcomes.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and support-

ers aim to tackle administrative burdens, improve care for incarcerated women, and strengthen Medicaid's role in maternal health.

ACOG highlights that over 80% of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable, emphasizing the need for action.

Why It Matters: Did You Know?

The US has higher maternal mortality rates compared to other developed nations, with serious inequities.

Maternal health includes well-being before, during, and after pregnancy, addressing issues like hypertension, diabetes, and depression.

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in appreciation of past services

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Education Means Power – in collaboration with
initiatives to impact the opioid crisis.

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