WHAT IS STILLBIRTH?

In the United States, stillbirth is defined as the death of a baby, in utero, any time from the 20th week of pregnancy onward. Stillbirths are devastating and have profound and lifelong impact on families who endure them. Many of these deaths are preventable and are happening in otherwise healthy, low risk pregnancies. The goal of this campaign is to empower birthing people with the knowledge of the risks and realities of stillbirth so that they are equipped to know the warning signs that something could be wrong and to feel confident in contacting their healthcare provider with their concerns.

THE STILLBIRTH PROBLEM IN NEW JERSEY AND THE UNITED STATES

The Centers for Disease Control ranks New Jersey as having the eighth highest stillbirth rate in the United States (Gregory, Valenzuela, & Hoyert, 2022).

The most current New Jersey data available is from 2018. According to the New Jersey Department of Health (NJ DOH), the 2018 Statewide Fetal Mortality Rate (FMR) per 1,000 live births was 6.9. Racial disparities are prominent in New Jersey; the 2018 FMR per 1,000 live births was 3 times higher for black, non-Hispanic birthing individuals (14.5) than for birthing people who were white, non-Hispanic (4.7). Refer to Figure 1.
The 2018 FMR per 1,000 live births for birthing individuals who were Black, non-Hispanic was 14.5, which was twice as high as the statewide FMR for all races and ethnicities (6.9). The FMR per 1,000 live births was below the statewide rate for birthing individuals who were white, non-Hispanic (4.7), and Hispanic (of any race) (6.7).

According to NJ DOH, the 2018 Statewide Fetal Mortality Rate (FMR) per 1,000 live births was 6.9. Births to Mothers ages 15-19 (11.6) and 40-49 (9.3) were higher than the statewide FMR for all maternal age groups. Refer to Figure 2.
Most are surprised that stillbirth is one of the most common adverse pregnancy outcome in the United States (The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists & Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine, 2020). Stillbirth occurs in 1 in 160 births. Even more shocking is that every pregnancy is at risk for stillbirth. Approximately 700 pregnancies end in stillbirth every year in New Jersey and over 21,000 in the United States (Centers for Disease Control, 2022). That is equivalent to the death of one kindergarten class every day in New Jersey. Every single day. Each one of these numbers represents a life lost, and a family forever changed.

The impact of stillbirth is wide reaching and includes:

- Mental health
- Stigma and social isolation
- Relationship strain
- Financial consequences
- Living and subsequent siblings
Unfortunately, the cause of about one-third of stillbirths cannot be determined. Studies show that at least 25% of all stillbirths are preventable. The most common known causes include:

- Problems with the placenta or umbilical cord
- Preeclampsia (a form of high blood pressure during pregnancy)
- Birth defects
- Intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR)
- Infections
- Trauma (such as direct impact to the birthing person’s uterus/abdomen in a fall, motor vehicle accident or domestic violence)
- Other health conditions, including diabetes and high blood pressure

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Advocate for yourself and your baby. Know your baby’s movements and behavior. Make your healthcare provider aware of your health history and any new/concerning symptoms that may arise.


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