

Pointers For Parents-To-Be

A Program To Prevent Preterm Birth

(NAPSA)—There's good news, bad news and better news about having a healthy baby.

The good news is that today, the preterm birth rate in the U.S. has fallen to 9.6 percent.

The bad news is, that means it still affects 380,000 babies a year, and is the No. 1 killer of newborns.

The better news is there's a program that successfully reduced preterm birth and it's described in a new book from the March of Dimes.

The Healthy Babies Are Worth the Wait® program includes consumer and professional education, public health interventions that augment existing public health services, and clinical interventions in the preconception and prenatal periods. It seeks not only to decrease preterm births but to change the attitudes and behaviors of providers and consumers regarding risk factors for "preventable" preterm birth.

When it was tried in Kentucky, thousands more babies were born full-term there. It's now been expanded to many other places. At least 39 weeks of pregnancy are important to a baby's health because critical development of the brain, lungs and other organs occurs during the last few weeks of pregnancy.

The book, "Healthy Babies Are Worth the Wait: A Partnership to Reduce Preterm Births in Kentucky Through Community-Based Interventions, 2007–2009," describes this innovative initiative, developed by the March of Dimes and Johnson & Johnson to respond to an alarming rise in the preterm birth rate in the United States that peaked in 2006.

Data published in the book demonstrate that the program achieved a statistically significant reduction in preterm birth rates.

"To give every baby a healthy start in life, we must increase best practices in caring for women before and during pregnancy and



A new book describes a program aimed at preventing preterm birth and giving women the information they need to make healthy decisions during pregnancy.

promote community-based programs such as Healthy Babies Are Worth the Wait," says Dr. Jennifer L. Howse, president of the March of Dimes.

The March of Dimes works to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. It's the leading nonprofit organization for pregnancy and baby health. For more than 75 years, moms and babies have benefited from the organization's research, education, vaccines and breakthroughs.

Smart Pregnancy Practices

Here's advice it offers mothers-to-be:

- See your doctor **BEFORE AND DURING** pregnancy.
- Avoid scheduling your delivery before 39 weeks of pregnancy unless medical problems make it necessary.
- Get help to stop smoking and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Do not use alcohol or drugs.
- Take a multivitamin with folic acid **EVERY** day before and during pregnancy.
- Brush, floss, and visit the dentist.

Learn More

The book is available online at www.elsevier.com/books. For the latest resources and information, visit www.marchofdimes.org or www.nacersano.org. You can also find it on Facebook and Twitter.