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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Raising Awareness of Infant Mortality

DUPAGE COUNTY—The DuPage County Health Department (DCHD) is joining state and federal healthcare partners during September to raise awareness of the high rate of infant mortality. September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month and has been sponsored since 1991 by the National Healthy Start Association.

Infant mortality is defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as the death of an infant before his or her first birthday.

Unfortunately, over 23,000 infants died during 2016 in the United States. The loss of a baby remains a sad reality for many parents and takes a serious toll on the health and well-being of families.

Fortunately, most newborns grow and thrive. However, for every 1,000 babies born in the United States, approximately six die during their first year. This figure, six deaths for every 1,000 births, is referred to as the infant mortality rate.

“The infant mortality rate is commonly accepted as a measure of the general health and well-being of a nation because factors affecting the health of entire populations can also affect infant mortality rates,” said Karen Ayala, DCHD Executive Director.

The U.S. infant mortality rate in 2016 was 5.9, and overall Illinois ranks 19th among the 50 states with an infant mortality rate of 6.4 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016. Disparities still exist; there are differences in infant mortality by age, race, and ethnicity.

The DuPage County infant mortality rate has fluctuated but remained lower than Illinois and U.S. rates over the last five years, from 3.5 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2012 to 3.7 in 2016. While the 2016 infant mortality rate increased slightly from 2012, it remains below the Healthy People 2020 national health goal of 6.0 set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2010.

(More)

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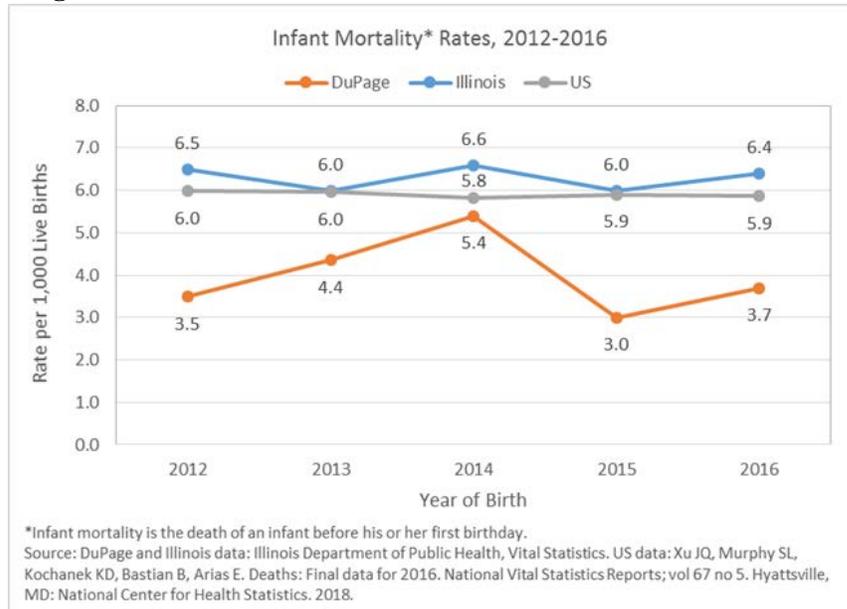
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Established in 1945, DuPage County Health Department promotes physical and emotional health; prevents illness injury and disability; protects health from environmental risk factors, and strives to assure the provision of accessible, quality service.



In the U.S., the five leading causes of infant death in 2016 were birth defects, preterm birth and low birth weight, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), maternal pregnancy complications, and injuries (e.g., suffocation).

Improving birth outcomes requires public health agencies working together with health care providers, communities, and other partners to reduce infant mortality in the U.S. This joint approach can help address the social, behavioral, and health risk factors that contribute to infant mortality and affect birth outcomes.

The good news is we can help reduce infant mortality among babies born preterm by addressing key risk factors such as prenatal smoking that contribute to low birth weight, preterm delivery, preterm-related death, and SIDS. Also, parents and caregivers can reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death by taking action to create safe sleep environments.

The Health Department promotes several community-based maternal and child health programs that focus on the reduction and prevention of infant mortality, racial disparities, and low birth weight. These programs, such as Better Birth Outcomes (Great Start), Family Case Management (FCM), Healthy Families, Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes Reporting System (APORS), and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), provide outreach and coordination of health services toward goals of a healthy pregnancy, healthy baby, and healthy early childhood.

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Outreach is prioritized for households with risk factors or special needs, with over 40,000 women and children participating in programs to reduce premature death and improve health outcomes.

A healthy pregnancy begins before conception and continues with appropriate prenatal care and addressing health problems if they arise.

The DuPage County Health Department has partnerships with AMITA Family Medicine Residency and Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital. These partnerships at the Southeast Public Health Center offer obstetrical appointments on site Tuesday afternoons, Thursday afternoons and Friday afternoons.

For questions about the Health Department's maternal and child health services, please call (630) 682-7400.

What Can You Do?

It is important for all women of child-bearing age to adopt healthy behaviors such as:

- Taking folic acid
- Maintaining a healthy diet and weight
- Getting regular physical activity
- Quitting tobacco use
- Not drinking excessive amounts of alcohol or using "street" drugs
- Talking to your health care provider about preventing and managing chronic diseases
- Talking with your health care provider about taking any medications
- Visiting your health care provider at the recommended scheduled time periods for your age and discuss if or when you are considering becoming pregnant
- Using effective contraception correctly and consistently if you are sexually active, but wish to delay or avoid pregnancy
- Getting help for intimate partner violence
- Preventing injuries and considering the safety of your home and family (e.g., wearing a seat belt, learning CPR, installing and testing smoke alarms)

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