

Improve Your Health in 2009: The Best Gift for Your Family

By Joe Kotsch, Perinatal Consultant



In the midst of a year full of campaign promises, from those who represent us to the talk that occurs down on main street America, it seems clear that our

health care needs are of great concern to our nation. No one person or group seems to have the solution to this mammoth problem that faces us.

When considering the topic of health improvements, it is important to begin with first investigating what constitutes good health practices and where to find those resources. In the realm of women's health, www.womenshealth.gov/ has been invaluable as a resource.

This resource resides on the U.S. Health and Human Resources website and is managed by the National Women's Health Information Center. It is an interactive site that serves the general populace as well as the seasoned healthcare professional.

Some of the information provided includes:

- Women's health-related statistics
- Coverage of a wide range of healthcare topics
- A variety of publications and health tools
- Calculators that meet many different needs

Another great feature is that the information is provided in both English and Spanish.

Another great place to go to get information and assistance is the Bureau of Health Promotion at KDHE. Visit www.kdheks.gov/bhp/index.html to link to information, program and health-related data resources and a variety of health programs that are designed to motivate and inspire people to seek out the means to good health.

Get out there and dive into the information that is available for you and your loved ones to improve your health both now and in the future. Remember, starting with a single positive step in improving your health (and that of your loved ones) today will make an ever greater difference for yourself, family, community and nation tomorrow.



Women's and Child Health USA Data Books for 2009 Now Available

Women's Health USA 2009, the eighth edition of the data book, selectively highlights emerging issues and trends in women's health using a variety of data sources. The data book, published by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), includes information and data on population characteristics, health status and health services utilization. New topics in the 2009 edition include women veterans, bleeding disorders, hearing problems, severe headaches and migraines. There is also a new section providing state-specific data on leading causes of death, overweight and obesity, and smoking among women. The data book is intended to be a concise reference for policymakers and program managers at the federal, state, and local levels to identify and clarify issues affecting the health of women. It is available at <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/whusa09>.

Readers: MCHB has also released Child Health USA 2008-2009, an annual report on the health status and service needs of children. The data book is available at <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/chusa08>.

Kansas Receives a Grade of “D” for Preterm Birth Rate

By Ileen Meyer, Director, Children & Families Section

The March of Dimes (MOD) released its second annual report card that focuses the nation’s attention on the growing problem of premature birth (birth before 37 weeks gestation.) For the second consecutive year, the U.S. earned only a “D” on the MOD Premature Birth Report Card, demonstrating that more than half a million of our nation’s newborns didn’t get the healthy start they deserved.

This year Kansas received a “D” for the preterm birth rate of 11.5 percent. The grade compares each state’s rate of premature birth to the nation’s objective of 7.6 percent or less by 2010.

Kansas overall report card reflects a slight improvement in the preterm birth rate with improvement in two areas – a decline in the smoking rates of women 18-44 years of age and improvement in the number of late preterm births. Kansas shows a conservative, but steady rate of improvement moving from 12.2 percent (2005) to 11.5 percent (2007) in two years.

MOD is spearheading two initiatives at the forefront for improvement in the Kansas grade. The first initiative will address the development of a statewide Prematurity Coalition comprised of key organizations that work on issues related to women and children’s health. Through collaboration and shared resources

this group will work to address specific contributors to premature birth.

The second initiative is focused on reducing the number of elective c-sections and inductions. The rise in preterm births (34-36 weeks) has been directly linked to rising rates of early inductions and c-sections. Presently, one-third of all births in Kansas result in a c-section. The state’s preterm birth rate will not improve unless deliveries prior to 39 weeks are performed only if medically necessary.

Our prematurity rate is still a double digit number and if you drill down into the causes of prematurity you will find multiple reasons, not the least of which include poor nutrition, substance use, poverty, as well as more clinical issues including the increasing number of c-sections.

We must pay more attention to preparing women for a healthy and safe pregnancy long before they are pregnant by placing a strong emphasis on preconception health as a means to reducing prematurity.

This project will focus on practice partnerships and a public awareness campaign. For more information visit www.marchofdimes.com/aboutus/49267_62035.asp.