

## Car Safety for Pregnant Women

By Joe Kotsch, Perinatal Consultant

With the advent of Spring, families are beginning to travel more in the car again. With more people on the roadways, the number of car accidents tends to increase as well. In addition, pregnant women seem to be particularly vulnerable in car accidents.

It is estimated that about 300 to 1,000 fetal deaths occur as a result of car accidents annually. This rate is about four times greater than the death rate for infants and children up to age 4. In response to these statistics, Ford Motor Company is funding a research project at Virginia Tech University. In this research project, car safety experts are in the process of developing a digital crash test model to assist in determining how best to protect pregnant women and fetuses in various types of car accidents.

The car safety experts confirm the biggest risk facing pregnant women in car crashes is placental detachment. This condition is mainly caused by the trauma associated when the steering wheel hits a pregnant belly during a crash. Once the placenta becomes detached, there is a subsequent loss of oxygen to the fetus, often resulting in fetal demise.

One way to help prevent this condition is for women to ensure their belly is positioned as far from the steering wheel as is safely possible. Employing the use of devices such as peddle extenders in addition to wearing a lap and shoulder safety belt system accompanied by an airbag can help to ensure that an increased distance up to about three inches can be achieved. By increasing

the distance between their bellies and the steering wheel, an improvement in outcomes from car crashes can be realized due to a reduction in force.

It should be highlighted the very best thing pregnant women can do to protect themselves against both external injury and injury within their bellies is to wear a seatbelt. As is true for most people, the combination lap and shoulder belt supplemented by an airbag is recommended for optimal safety.

Pregnant women should be educated to place the shoulder belt between their breasts and off to the side of their belly and the lap belt beneath the lower curve of their bellies and over their hips. In this manner, the belts will be optimally situated to help prevent trauma in the event of a crash.



For more information on car safety research and pregnant women being conducted by Virginia Tech and Ford Motor Company contact: Lynn A. Nystrom, 540-231-4371 or e-mail at [tansy@vt.edu](mailto:tansy@vt.edu).

For information on seat belt safety for pregnant women visit: [www.marchofdimes.com/pnhec/159\\_30430.asp](http://www.marchofdimes.com/pnhec/159_30430.asp).

## Kansas Announces Partnership in Text4baby Initiative

By Joe Kotsch, Perinatal Consultant

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) officially signed an agreement to participate as a state partner in the national Text4baby initiative on March 18, 2010. As a result of that agreement, KDHE and several other local Kansas partners held a press conference on May 12, 2010 to begin promoting the text4baby initiative to Kansas women.



Text4baby is part of a national campaign from National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition (HMHB) which provides free health information via text messaging. Text4baby is made possible through a broad, public-private partnership which includes the White House Office on Science and Technology Policy, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Voxiva, CTIA-The Wireless Foundation, Grey Healthcare Group (a WPP company) and founding corporate sponsor Johnson & Johnson.

Text4baby is a free texting service for pregnant women and women who are within one year of delivery offering them commercial-free SMS health messages timed to their due date or to the age of their babies up to age one.

Women can sign up for text4baby by texting the word "BABY" to 511411 to receive text messages in English or "BEBE" to 511411 to receive text messages in Spanish.

Text4baby offers reliable health information on topics such as:

- Immunization
- Breastfeeding
- Quit smoking
- Oral health
- Prenatal care
- Infant feeding
- Exercise
- Labor and delivery
- Flu
- Infant care
- Nutrition
- Car seat safety

This information is supplemented with reminders for the women to see their health care providers routinely for their own health and the health of their babies. What could be a better idea?

Nationwide, 42,518 women have enrolled in text4baby. In Kansas, a total of 688 women have enrolled in this texting initiative. Roughly, about two-thirds of the women enrolled are pregnant while the remaining one-third have recently delivered a baby. Of those enrolled so far, 94 percent of the women say that they would recommend text4baby to a friend.

Sign up yourself or someone you deeply care about today! For more information on text4baby or to sign up yourself or someone you love visit [www.text4baby.org/](http://www.text4baby.org/).

## Annual NAFSC and BFSS Meetings in Nashville, Tennessee

By Joe Kotsch, Perinatal Consultant

The annual meetings for the National Association of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders State Coordinators (NAFSC) and the Building Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders State Systems (BFSS) took place in Nashville, Tennessee from May 3-6, 2010. The Nashville area gained national notice in May due to heavy rains with associated widespread flooding. The meetings were able to be held since the meeting location was about two miles from the nearest area of flooding.

A total of 26 Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) State and Tribal Nations coordinators met to discuss a variety of topics related to increasing awareness of FASD by sharing prevention and sustainability ideas and presenting information from established subcommittees.

At this year's face-to-face meeting, Jerome Romero, NAFSC Chair (New Mexico), was honored by his peers for his tireless efforts aimed at preventing FASD's with a special emphasis of educating the teen population as well as for providing leadership among the state coordinators.

This year's BFSS meeting theme was *Harmony and Collaboration: Working Together to Keep FASD a Priority*. FASD Center for Excellence staff gave the annual update and report on partnerships of states with and without direct grants through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for the prevention of FASD.

Plenary sessions were given on current science and research trends in FASD and policies that address drinking among women of childbearing age with corresponding breakout sessions that were throughout the meeting.

In addition to the plenary sessions, the states broke into working groups to address the following topics:

- The process and importance of establishing a state coordinator
- Creating and sustaining statewide task forces
- Development of state plans
- Creating more regional and state-to-state efforts
- A basic 101 session on developing state systems

Of particular interest to the meeting participants, the Self-Advocacy Network for Individuals with an FASD organized a panel whose members gave both a performance highlighting a special individuals talent and spoke about what it is like as a person to live with a FASD.

The panel members performances included: an interpretational dance, an Elvis impersonation and Native American flute music. These performances brought tears to the audience along with a new perspective and respect for individuals with an FASD.

For more information visit [www.fascenter.samhsa.gov/index.cfm](http://www.fascenter.samhsa.gov/index.cfm).