

# HEALTH MATTERS

*For Your Health*



BY DR. RICHARD N. WALDMAN

## A Safer Pregnancy Ahead

No woman should die as a result of being pregnant. Yet each day in the U.S., one to two women die from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. The rate of maternal mortality—deaths in women within a year of the end of a pregnancy from a cause related to or made worse by pregnancy—is too high. And the situation may be even worse than estimates suggest because some deaths are not reported as related to gestation.

For many years, medical advances, safer deliveries in hospitals, higher standards of living, improved environmental and living

conditions, a lower national birth rate, and an increased focus on prenatal care helped steadily reduce maternal death. But recently, maternal mortality has been on the rise.

The leading causes of pregnancy-related deaths are hemorrhage, blood clots, high blood pressure, infection, stroke, amniotic fluid in the bloodstream, and heart disease.

Some factors that may contribute to maternal mortality include more women getting pregnant later in life and more starting pregnancy with preexisting medical conditions

such as diabetes and obesity. Black women also experience a significantly higher number of pregnancy-related deaths than white or Hispanic women—a disparity which needs more study and has yet to be explained.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle before becoming pregnant and finding appropriate prenatal care are integral elements in lowering the risk of dangerous complications. In fact, as many as half of the annual maternal deaths could be prevented if women had better access to health care, received more quality care, and improved their health and lifestyle habits.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists encourages all reproductive-age women to meet with their doctors before pregnancy to discuss preconception care. This allows your doctor adequate time to review personal health information that could affect a future pregnancy and treat any preexisting medical conditions that you may have such as high blood pressure, seizures, heart disease and substance abuse problems.

If you are pregnant, it is imperative that you visit your doctor on a regular basis, and the sooner you start, the better. Prenatal visits al-

low your doctor to closely watch your health and your baby's progress while providing you with any special care you may need during your pregnancy.

If you are uninsured and don't have regular access to a doctor, there are programs in every state that provide low- or no-cost medical and dental insurance coverage for children and pregnant women ([insurekidsnow.gov](http://insurekidsnow.gov)). Non-pregnant women can find free or low-cost health care clinics by state at [findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov](http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov).

*Dr. Richard N. Waldman is president of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.*

## MY FATHER'S HOUSE MINISTRIES

Woodhaven Community Church  
and  
Project Esperanza  
invite you to our annual

### "Christmas Blessings"

Toy/Shoe Give-a-way  
Saturday December 18, 2010  
9 a.m.-12p.m.

At

**My Father's House Ministries**  
2511 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. Portland  
(corner of NE MLK Blvd. and Russell)  
503.488.5481  
Event for Children accompanied by an adult only.  
**Limited Quantities**

### "Bendiciones Navidenas"

Regalos para ninos con adulto  
presente solamente

Sabado, 18 de Diciembre 2010  
De 9.am.-12 p.m.

En la Iglesia

**My Father's House Ministries**  
Preguntas: Rosy 503.473.5733

## HEALTHWATCH

**Families with Mental Illness** -- A free, 12-week course for people whose family members live with mental illness is offered at Emanuel Hospital, Mt. Hood Medical Center and Providence Medical Center. The course has been described as "life-changing" by former participants. Registration is required by calling 503-203-3326.

**Managing Chronic Hepatitis C** -- Third Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m. The informative session is led by a registered nurse to help you manage side effects of medications and dosage preparations and administration; doctor referral required. To register, call 503-251-6313.

**Better Breathers** -- An asthma educational support group meets on the 1st Tuesday of the month from 1:15 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. at Adventist Medical Center. For information, call 503-251-6830.

**Cancer Resource Center** -- Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer. The center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Lead Poisoning Prevention** -- Learn how to protect your family from lead poisoning. Ideal for folks in live in older homes with children or pregnant women. Qualified participants receive a free kit of safety and testing supplies. Call 503-284-6827.

**Parenting Classes** -- Newborns don't come with instruction manuals but parents and parents-to-be can learn about a variety of topics from pain and childbirth to breastfeeding to infant CPR and much more. For a schedule of events, call 503-574-6595 or visit: [providence.org/classes](http://providence.org/classes).

**Cardiac-Rehab Exercises** -- A medically supervised exercise program for people dealing with heart conditions. For information, call 503-251-6260.

**Stroke Alert Screening** -- Check your carotid arteries with a painless ultrasound to assess your risk. Fee \$40. To schedule a screening, call 503-251-6137.

**Empowerment through Relaxation** -- Free informal meditation classes that address breathing techniques, some gentle ancient African yoga poses and mental balancing techniques -- People have left these classes joyful and with a peaceful view of their lives. Call Dr. Marcelitte Failla at 503-228-6140.

**Powerful Tools For Caregivers** -- 6-week educational series designed to help family caregivers take care of themselves while caring for relatives or friends with chronic illness. Class size is limited, and registration is required. Call 503-413-8018.

**Leg Alert Screening** -- Check for peripheral arterial disease with this safe, simple screening using ankle and arm blood pressure. The fee is \$40. To schedule an appointment, call 503-251-6137.

**Smoke-Free Support Group** -- Meets Mondays, 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. For information, call 503-256-4000.