

# CDC Vitalsigns™

## Pregnancy-related deaths

Saving women's lives before, during and after delivery



Want to learn more?

[www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/maternal-deaths](http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/maternal-deaths)

# 700

About 700 women die from pregnancy-related complications each year in the US.

# 3 in 5

About 3 in 5 pregnancy-related deaths could be prevented.

# 1 in 3

About 1 in 3 pregnancy-related deaths occur 1 week to 1 year after delivery.

## Overview:

Every pregnancy-related death is tragic, especially because about 60% are preventable. Still, about 700 women die each year from complications of pregnancy. A pregnancy-related death can happen during pregnancy, at delivery, and even up to a year afterward (postpartum).

### For 2011-2015:

- about 1/3 of deaths (31%) happened **during pregnancy**;
- about 1/3 (36%) happened **at delivery or in the week after**; and
- about 1/3 (33%) happened **1 week to 1 year postpartum**.
- Heart disease and stroke caused more than 1 in 3 deaths (34%). Other leading causes of death included infections and severe bleeding.
- Black and American Indian/Alaska Native women were about 3 times as likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause as White women.



## PROBLEM:

# Pregnancy-related death can happen throughout pregnancy and after.

## Every death reflects a web of missed opportunities.

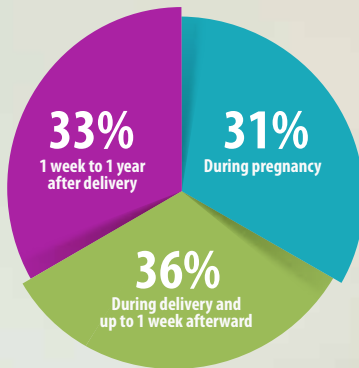
- Factors playing a part can include:
  - access to care;
  - missed or delayed diagnoses;
  - not recognizing warning signs.
- Most deaths are preventable, no matter when they occur.
- We can better identify and close gaps in access to quality care.



**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

# Preventing pregnancy-related death every step of the way.

Death can happen up to a year after delivery.



SOURCE: CDC Vital Signs, May 2019

## Make sure pregnant women receive quality care during pregnancy and after.

### DURING PREGNANCY



### AT DELIVERY



### POSTPARTUM



**During Pregnancy:** Improve access to and delivery of quality prenatal care, which includes managing chronic conditions and educating about warning signs.

**At Delivery:** Standardize patient care, including delivering high-risk women at hospitals with specialized providers and equipment.

**Postpartum:** Provide high-quality care for mothers up to one year after birth, which includes communicating with patients about warning signs and connecting to prompt follow-up care.

## Leading causes of death differ throughout pregnancy and after.

- Heart disease and stroke cause most deaths overall.
- Obstetric emergencies, like severe bleeding and amniotic fluid embolism (when amniotic fluid enters a mother's bloodstream), cause most deaths at delivery.
- In the week after delivery, severe bleeding, high blood pressure and infection are most common.
- Cardiomyopathy (weakened heart muscle) causes most deaths 1 week to 1 year after delivery.

## THE WAY FORWARD >>>

### HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS CAN:

- Help patients manage chronic conditions.
- Communicate with patients about warning signs.
- Use tools to flag warning signs early so women can receive timely treatment.

### HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS CAN:

- Standardize coordination of care and response to emergencies.
- Improve delivery of quality prenatal and postpartum care.
- Train non-obstetric providers to consider recent pregnancy history.

### STATES AND COMMUNITIES CAN:

- Assess and coordinate delivery hospitals for risk-appropriate care.
- Support review of the causes behind every maternal death.

### WOMEN & THEIR FAMILIES CAN:

- Know and communicate about symptoms of complications.
- Note pregnancy history any time medical care is received in the year after delivery.

### For more information

1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

TTY: 1-888-232-6348 | Web: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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