

Our mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality.

Did you know that the United States recently ranked 30th in infant mortality rates when compared to countries in Europe (NCHS Data Brief, No. 23, November 2009)? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "The main cause of the United States' high infant mortality rate when compared to Europe is the very high percentage of preterm births in the United States."

The March of Dimes is the leading voluntary health organization dedicated to improving the health of babies. Our goal is to help all women have stronger, healthier babies. No one knows what causes half of all premature births, but scientific research is closing the gap. It is a growing and serious problem, and solving it requires a multi-faceted approach, including improving women's health prior to pregnancy through preconception health programs.

Although prematurity is the leading cause of death during the first month of life, birth defects continue to be the major cause of infant death during the first year of life. Our programs continue to target birth defects in Florida through prevention and education campaigns. We also fight to protect access to health care, so that children can see a doctor and pregnant women can obtain the critically important care they need to have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.



In an average week in Florida:

633 babies are born preterm

104 babies are born very preterm

1,710 babies are born by cesarean section

33 babies die before their first birthday

Source: 2007 NCHS via marchofdimes.com/peristats



To learn more about our programs, to volunteer, or to make a donation, please contact one of our local offices or Lori Reeves, State Program Director, by email lreeves@marchofdimes.com or phone (407) 599-5077.

- Big Bend Division..... (850) 422-3152
- Broward Division..... (954) 772-2290
- Central Division..... (407) 599-5077
- Gulf Coast Division..... (850) 785-6460
- Miami Dade/Monroe Division.... (305) 477-1192
- North Central Florida Division.... (352) 378-9522
- Northeast Florida Division..... (904) 398-2821
- Palm Beach Division..... (561) 684-0102
- Southwest Coast Division..... (239) 433-3463
- Space Coast Division..... (321) 775-0205
- Tampa Bay Division..... (813) 287-2600
- Treasure Coast Division..... (772) 562-0115
- West Central Division..... (863) 687-8909

For information on the signs and symptoms of preterm labor or other concerns related to pregnancy, planning for a baby, low birthweight, birth defects, research, or grants contact the March of Dimes Pregnancy and Newborn Health Education Center at marchofdimes.com or nacersano.org

14 Florida NICU Family Support Centers® are supported by a grant from:



marchofdimes.com/florida



Florida Chapter
2011 Mission Report

We're Here for Every Baby

Nearly 240,000 babies are born in Florida every year, and the March of Dimes Florida Chapter volunteers and staff are here to help them have healthier births. We fund important research and programs that help moms have full-term pregnancies and babies begin healthy lives. We also provide information and support to families whose baby was born too soon or sick. Thanks to our advocacy efforts, Florida now screens babies for 29 of the most serious but treatable metabolic conditions. Surfactant and nitrous oxide therapies save the lives of tens of thousands of babies suffering from respiratory distress syndrome because they were born too early. And folic acid education and fortification campaigns have helped protect babies from neural tube birth defects like spina bifida.

NICU Family Support ®

Nothing can completely prepare a family for the stress of having a baby hospitalized in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). The March of Dimes NICU Family Support Program at Shands Hospital in Gainesville is helping families cope with the stress of having a sick baby, whether the baby was premature or has other health problems. We currently have 14 NICU Family Support Centers in hospitals throughout Florida to provide families with a resource for online support while their babies are in the NICU. Families can also share their experiences with other parents at shareyourstory.org.

Mission Volunteers

We are here for every baby, and families are a critical part of our efforts to save babies. Mission volunteers support our NICU Family Support programs, raise money by organizing March for Babies® Family Teams, and participate in many other March of Dimes efforts. To become a mission volunteer or for help starting a Family Team, call one of the offices listed in this brochure.



Working in Our Communities

During 2010 the Florida Chapter awarded more than \$530,000 in state and local grants. Throughout Florida, March of Dimes staff and volunteers work tirelessly to protect access to care for mothers and babies by working with lawmakers and community partners. Our partners on the Florida Prematurity Campaign include the Florida Department of Health, Florida's Healthy Start, and The Lawton & Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies. These partnerships help us address concerns about the rising number of late preterm births — babies born between 34 and 36 weeks of pregnancy. We also work with community agencies to provide higher quality prenatal care for pregnant women in the form of Centering Pregnancy® and other group prenatal care programs. March of Dimes also provides information for both the general public and health care professionals through a variety of programs.

Healthy Babies, Healthy Business ®

Healthy Babies, Healthy Business® is a free service we offer to our partners to enhance their existing wellness programs. Nationally over half a million babies are born prematurely every year, and the numbers are growing. Prematurity robs families of the full potential of their beloved children, society of future leaders, and our nation of strong and healthy citizens. And it places a tremendous financial burden on everyone, including our health systems, businesses, and society as a whole. Direct health care costs to an employer for a premature baby average \$41,600 — 15 times higher than the \$2,830 for a healthy full-term baby. Healthy Babies, Healthy Business is our way of supporting the needs of families in the workplace, helping them to have healthier babies. Businesses can also support March of Dimes programs by becoming a sponsor, forming a corporate team for March for Babies, or by participating in other March of Dimes events.



A baby is born every 2.2 minutes in Florida. While most are healthy, nearly 1 in 8 is born too early, and 1 in 43 is born with a serious birth defect.

Healthy Women, Healthy Babies

Taking care of yourself before pregnancy can help reduce the risks of poor birth outcomes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, addressing certain health problems prior to pregnancy can have a positive impact on healthy birth outcomes, as well as improving women's health. For example, experts estimate that up to 70% of neural tube defects (disabling and sometimes fatal birth defects of the brain and spine) could be prevented if all women of childbearing age consumed 400 micrograms of folic acid every day. Working in collaboration with the Florida Department of Health, the March of Dimes Florida Chapter launched the program "Every Woman Florida" which provides information to women on how to be healthy before they become pregnant. In addition, the Florida Preconception Health Council brings together leaders from a variety of Florida agencies to examine policies and services that help women be as healthy as possible, even if they are not thinking about having a baby in the near future. Visit everywomanfl.com for more information.

Be a Voice for Babies

Babies don't vote, but you do. Become an advocate for our tiniest citizens. Help us protect access to health care for pregnant women and children in Florida. Becoming an advocacy volunteer is simple and fun. Contact Melissa Joiner, State Public Affairs Director, at mjoiner@marchofdimes.com or 850-422-3152.