



News Release

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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WORLD PREMATURETY DAY OBSERVED SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17

Westchester County Health Department Raises Awareness

(White Plains, NY) – In an effort to call attention to the risk and hardships created by premature birth, the Westchester County Health Department is raising awareness that World Prematurity Day is this Sunday, November 17.

This year's theme, promoted by The March of Dimes, is *Small Action Big Impact: Immediate Skin-to-Skin Contact for Every Baby Everywhere*, which highlights the healing power of skin to skin contact between parents or caregivers and premature infants.

World Prematurity Day is set aside to remember that premature birth can cause lifelong health problems and life-threatening complications, and is the leading cause of death in children under age five. Babies who are born before 37 weeks of pregnancy are at increased risk for health problems that may affect their heart, lung, digestive system, brain, hearing or vision.

One in every 10 babies is born prematurely in the U.S., which is among the top 10 nations with the highest number of preterm births, and African-Americans have the highest rate of preterm births, nearly double that of whites in Westchester.

To improve birth outcomes, Westchester County Executive George Latimer pledged an additional million dollars to extend the Black Maternal Child Health Initiative through 2025, a program launched last year. The goal is to improve Black maternal and child health outcomes, reduce racial healthcare inequities, and create lasting partnerships to focus on ensuring successful birthing practices for all in Westchester.

The funding provided by Westchester County has enabled Birth from the Earth, the Children's Health Research Foundation/Lower Hudson Valley Perinatal Network and St. John's Riverside Hospital to grow their programs

and serve more women. County support has expanded the reach of home visits, breastfeeding support, prenatal and post-partum consultation and support groups, as well as data analytics.

Westchester County Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, said: “Become involved in these important initiatives, make use of these resources, and encourage your friends and family members to do so as well. Improving the wellbeing of all women and children in our County benefits us all.”

While the causes of premature birth differ case by case, women can take these steps to improve birth outcomes:

- Before pregnancy, reach a healthy weight and see a healthcare provider. Seek treatment for medical conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, depression and thyroid problems. Know your HIV and Hepatitis B status.
- [Wait at least 18 months](#) between giving birth and becoming pregnant again.
- Protect yourself from infections. Get [vaccinated](#), wash your hands often, and don't eat raw meat, fish, or eggs. Practice safe sex to protect against [sexually transmitted infections](#).
- [Eat healthy foods](#) and [be active daily to](#) reduce stress and help you gain the right amount of weight during pregnancy.
- Don't [smoke](#), drink [alcohol](#), or use harmful drugs. Ask your provider about programs that can help you quit. Tell your provider about any medicines you take, with or without a prescription.
- Go to all your [prenatal care checkups](#), even if you're feeling fine. Prenatal care helps your provider make sure you and your baby are healthy.
- Learn the [signs and symptoms of preterm labor](#), and what to do. This won't reduce your risk of preterm labor, but it can give you time to get [treatment](#) that may help stop your labor.

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