



Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County wants you to know. . .

- ♥ A baby's brain grows to about 80 percent of adult size by three years of age and 90 percent by age five. That means it's really important that you talk to your baby, hold him, smile and as he gets older, read to him, praise him and provide lots of learning opportunities so all those brain connections get developed in a positive manner. Abuse, neglect, family violence and other negative experiences can affect your child's emotional development and learning ability for a lifetime.
- ♥ Researchers found that when mothers frequently spoke to their infants, their children learned almost 300 more words by age 2 than did their peers whose mothers rarely spoke to them.
- ♥ Every baby born in Palm Beach County can have a free screening done before leaving the hospital to check for risks that could affect his or her healthy physical and emotional and intellectual development. Get the screen.
- ♥ Why should you be concerned if your child shows signs of developmental delay? Because a delay may lead to future behavioral problems, speech and language difficulties and challenges in learning.
- ♥ Are you giving your child the nurturing support he or she needs? Your relationship with your child now can greatly affect behaviors later in life. Early nurturing positively influences your child's health, behavior and learning ability later in life.
- ♥ Give your unborn child the opportunity for a healthy beginning – start prenatal care as soon as you know you are pregnant. You'll improve your chances of a healthy birth and the future health of your baby after birth.
- ♥ Eating healthy foods while you are pregnant is very important, after all, your unborn baby eats and drinks what you eat and drink. Eat healthy, your baby depends on you for nutrition.
- ♥ Stress can affect how you feel and how your body works. Stress during pregnancy can make your baby be born too soon. There are ways to relieve stress – lie down, take deep breaths, talk calmly to yourself, focus on solutions.

- ♥ At least one of every 10 babies in Palm Beach County is born weighing less than a sack of flour – that's 5 ½ pounds or less. They are more likely to die or have lifetime health problems and learning difficulties. Many of these early births are because of the mother's health before and during pregnancy – so get healthy before and stay that way while you're pregnant by getting early and regular prenatal care, eating healthy and avoiding all alcohol and tobacco.
- ♥ 91 Palm Beach County babies died last year before their first birthday. Another 57 died without ever taking a first breath. Add those together and now visualize a dozen empty kindergarten classrooms. Make sure your baby isn't one of those statistics, get healthy, stay healthy and get prenatal care.
- ♥ Premature babies cost ten times more than healthy babies. In 2007, the average medical costs for a premature baby were more than 10 times as high as they were for a healthy full-term baby. The costs for a healthy baby from birth to his first birthday were \$4,551. For a preterm baby, the costs were \$49,033.
- ♥ Every pregnant woman in Palm Beach County can have a free evaluation to find out if she has risk factors that could affect her health and that of her baby. Ask your doctor if you haven't already been screened.
- ♥ Smoking during pregnancy is associated with low birth weight. Smaller babies are more likely to develop health problems. Smoking increases the risk of miscarriage, premature birth and still birth.
- ♥ Folic acid helps prevent certain birth defects. It is found in some cereals and can be bought as a supplement. If you or someone you know is of child-bearing age, urge them to take folic acid even before getting pregnant.
- ♥ Children born to mothers who receive early prenatal care are more likely to learn better, have better language skills, better behavior and motor skills. Start prenatal care in the first three months.
- ♥ You can increase your baby's brain power just by talking to her, reading to her and making lots of eye contact from the time she is born. All of this helps important connections in the brain develop during those first three years when a baby's brain grows to 80% of its full size.
- ♥ Eighteen months apart is baby smart.....when there is 18-24 months between births a mother's body has a chance to recover. Babies are more likely to be happier and healthier when parents don't face the demands of two tiny babies.
- ♥ It's important that babies are not delivered earlier than 39 weeks unless it is medically necessary. The last few weeks of pregnancy are really important in a

baby's development. Major organs, like the brain, lungs and liver, are still growing. Eyes and ears are developing. He's learning to suck and swallow.
Healthy Babies Are Worth the Wait

- ♥ Put your baby Back to Sleep! Lay your baby on her back to keep her healthy. Stomach sleeping can be dangerous and has been linked to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.
- ♥ It may feel satisfying to cuddle in your bed with your baby, but don't do it! It's too risky. Adults can roll over and smother the baby, especially overtired parents or those who have consumed drugs or alcohol. Put your baby to bed on a firm mattress with no toys, pillows or heavy blankets in with him. You'll sleep more soundly and your baby will be safer.
- ♥ A University of South Florida study found babies whose fathers are absent during pregnancy are four times more likely to die in their first year of life. Those infants also are more likely to be born prematurely and with lower birth weights. The reasons? Moms are more stressed which affects their health, and they are less likely to get to prenatal appointments.

If you have questions or need answers, call Children's Services Council's Parent InfoLine at 1-888-634-7900