

*Revised July 2009*

Stillbirth is the death of an infant in-utero at 20 or more completed gestational weeks. More than 25,000 babies are stillborn in the United States each year – 70 babies each and every day.

- Almost 50 percent of these deaths occur at or near full term and often seem to be otherwise healthy babies. The majority of stillbirths (85%) occur before delivery with 15 percent occurring during labor and delivery.
- It is estimated that nearly two-thirds of all stillbirth deaths remain unexplained. Researchers feel that this is more likely due to a failure to investigate the deaths, rather than a medical mystery.
- Stillbirth deaths cut across all socio-economic classes, races, religions and maternal age groups. No woman is immune.
- Some of the more common diagnosable causes for stillbirth are: placental abruption and other placental problems, birth defects and chromosomal abnormalities, uncontrolled diabetes, preeclampsia, cord accidents and infections.
- The risk factors for stillbirth include: advanced maternal age, maternal obesity, maternal smoking, prior stillbirth, neonatal death or other fetal losses, uncontrolled maternal diabetes and maternal hypertension.
- After a stillbirth, few hospitals offer an autopsy, placental exam or clinical testing to the parents to determine the cause of death.
- Mothers who suffer a stillbirth do not receive recognition in 25 out of 50 states. There is no certificate of birth – making these babies births “invisible.”

While studies into potential prevention strategies for stillbirth are ongoing, following are some helpful strategies for pregnant women to follow to help reduce the risk of stillbirth:

- Begin to monitor your baby’s activity at around 28 weeks. Kicks Count! Guidelines
- Do not smoke, drink alcohol or use drugs (unless prescribed by your doctor).
- Report any vaginal bleeding, leakage or sharp pain.
- If you are post-term, discuss options with your doctor. Pregnancies longer than 42 weeks may be at increased risk for stillbirth.
- Do not hesitate to request a second or third opinion anytime during your pregnancy if needed to put your mind at ease.

*This is for informational purposes only and is not intended to replace your doctor’s advice.*