



The joys of bringing home a new baby are immeasurable. The last thing anyone wants to think about is the possibility of losing their new family member. Unfortunately, infant mortality is a devastating reality that many families have to deal with. Infant mortality is defined as the death of a baby before his or her first birthday and according to the Ohio department of health, 1,045 infants in Ohio died before their first birthday in 2012. Ohio's infant mortality rate is higher than the national average.

When the death of an infant occurs, there may be no explanation as to why it happened. However, there are five leading causes of infant mortality in which, account for fifty seven percent of infant deaths in the United States. These top five are:

- The baby was born with a serious birth defect.
- The infant was born too early and is too small (preterm birth before thirty seven weeks gestation).
- The baby was a victim of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.
- There were effects from maternal complications of pregnancy.
- The infant was a victim of injuries.

Now that we know some of the things that contribute to infant mortality, we need to look at what we can do to prevent it. In general, living a healthy lifestyle and managing health conditions before getting pregnant are good practices for all women who may become pregnant. More specifically, it is important for women of reproductive age to:

- Take folic acid supplements.
- Maintain a healthy diet and weight.
- Be physically active regularly.
- Stop all tobacco use.
- Not drink excessive amounts of alcohol or use street drugs.
- Talk to her health care provider about screening and proper management of chronic diseases.
- Talk to her health care provider about taking any medications.
- Visit her health care provider at recommended scheduled time periods for her age and discuss if or when she is considering becoming pregnant.
- Use effective contraception correctly and consistently if she is sexually active, but wishes to delay or prevent pregnancy.
- Prevent injuries and consider the safety of her home and family.

There is no promise or guarantee that your baby will be born healthy and won't be a victim of infant mortality. Although, there are many things that you can do to better the health of you and your baby as well as lower the risk of infant death. A healthy baby begins with a healthy pregnancy.