Pregnancy-Related Death in South Carolina

700 US Women die each year from pregnancy-related complications.

3 in 5 Pregnancy-related deaths could be prevented.

2x Black infant mortality rates are over 2x higher than white infant mortality rates in SC.

Overview:

A pregnancy-related death occurs when a woman dies while pregnant or within 1 year after the pregnancy. The cause must be related to or made worse by her pregnancy or its management. [1]

The pregnancy-related mortality rate is the number of pregnancy-related deaths per 1,000 live births.

In the US, 60% of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable. [2]

In South Carolina:

During 2013-2017, the rate of pregnancy-related death in South Carolina was higher than the national rate and the Healthy People 2020 goal. [3]

Compared to the previous five-year period, the rate of pregnancy-related death increased among minority populations and in South Carolina overall.

Black infant mortality rates (12.2 deaths per 1,000 live births) were more than twice as high as white infant mortality rates (5 deaths per 1,000 live births) in 2018. [3]

Overall, South Carolina ranks in the bottom 10 in the country on a number of reproductive health and birth outcome markers, including infant mortality, low birthweight babies, and preterm births. [4]
Causes of Pregnancy-Related Death:

Leading causes of death differ throughout pregnancy and after. [2]

- Overall: heart disease and stroke
- Delivery: obstetric emergencies (e.g., severe bleeding, amniotic fluid embolism)
- In the week after: severe bleeding, high blood pressure, infection
- One week to one year after: cardiomyopathy (weakened heart muscle)

How to Prevent Pregnancy-Related Death:

- During pregnancy: improve access to quality prenatal care, including education and managing chronic conditions [2]
- At delivery: standardize patient care, including delivering high-risk women at hospitals with specialized providers and equipment
- Postpartum: provide high quality care to mothers up to one year post birth, communicate about warning signs, and provide follow-up care

Factors that play a part can include:

- Access to care
- Missed or delayed diagnoses
- Not recognizing warning signs

Citations:

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