



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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*Mother and baby health*

## **This Mother's Day, there is health care support for low income newborns and mothers to be**

Mother's Day is a celebration. But to new mothers, it can be another day of real challenges. It can also raise a lot of questions for any woman who's pregnant or trying to raise a young child while facing the difficulties of low income.

"What diet should I follow now that I'm pregnant?"

"How long should I breastfeed my baby?"

"What about formula?"

"How can I make sure my home is safe for my baby?"

And the biggest question of all: "How can I get medical care for myself and my baby if I can't afford health insurance?"

Dora Montgomery hears these questions every day of the week, not just May 10.

"Most of my work is talking and helping mothers who are pregnant," Dora says. Dora is a bilingual social worker and a member of CareOregon's Maternal Moms Team. (CareOregon is the largest health plan for Oregon Health Plan members, including about 17,000 Oregonians who speak Spanish as their first language.)

In her work, Dora and her team makes sure mothers and babies get good health care and good answers to their questions about what to do to keep their babies healthy. And they can tell about other resources that can give needed help in the community, regardless of health plan membership.

**Dora is available to take calls from the media on this subject Monday thru Thursday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Please call Jeanie Lunsford to make arrangements.**

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**Information for mothers** is available to anyone who has access to the Internet on CareOregon's web site. You don't have to be a CareOregon member to use it. Click first to [www.careoregon.org](http://www.careoregon.org), then follow the link to the Spanish language portion of the site. Follow the link to "Miembros," "Información sobre de salud" and "Niño saludable." Or connect directly with [www.careoregon.org/spanish/member/mhealthybabiesSP.html](http://www.careoregon.org/spanish/member/mhealthybabiesSP.html). Downloadable brochures give good health information for pregnant women and about infants up to 1 year of age.

### **About CareOregon**

CareOregon is a non-profit health plan that serves Oregonians who have Medicare and Medicaid, including about one-quarter of Oregon Health Plan participants. Its mission is to help all Oregonians have quality, culturally appropriate health care, even in these times when health care is hard to afford. CareOregon works with its members and its network of providers so members can live healthier lives and have high-quality, affordable, effective health care whenever they need it, now and in the future. About 34 percent of CareOregon's more than 100,000 members do not speak English as a first language. Spanish is the most common non-English first language among CareOregon members, followed by Russian and Vietnamese. For more information, see [www.careoregon.org/](http://www.careoregon.org/).

### **CareOregon's CareSupport Program includes the Maternal Moms Team.**

CareSupport staff includes teams of registered nurse case managers, behavioral health case managers, health care guides (social workers) and clinical pharmacists who help members with medical issues that need more than average care. CareSupport helps these members and more:

- Pregnant women who are on methadone.
- Mothers who have recently had a baby.
- People with both Medicaid and Medicare.
- Patients with chronic illness like congestive heart failure, asthma, COPD (chronic lung disease) or diabetes.
- Patients going to a skilled nursing facility or home after being in the hospital.
- Patients in the hospital for mental health reasons.

# ***Mothers' greatest concerns Q & A***

## **NUTRITION AND BREASTFEEDING**

- **What should I do when I'm pregnant?**

Pregnant women who eat properly have healthier babies and can get early prenatal care.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, known as WIC, is a nutrition education program that teaches families how to make healthy nutrition choices. You are eligible for WIC if you live in Oregon, are pregnant or have just had a baby, or are breastfeeding. It's also for babies and children under 5 years old. WIC income guidelines are basically the same as for food stamps, the Oregon Health Plan or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

- **What about breastfeeding my baby?**

Breast milk is the perfect food for your baby. It protects your baby from many childhood diseases and allergies. It helps your baby have the best health possible,

- **How long should I breastfeed?**

- Moms should breastfeed when their babies are hungry, usually every one to two hours. How long you will breast feed will vary, but about a year is typical.

- **Where can I find help?**

Your baby's doctor is a great resource for information about breastfeeding.

Here are some other helpful resources:

- Oregon Breastfeeding Promotion Program, which you can reach at [www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/bf/](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/bf/)
- Local WIC offices, which you can find by calling 1-800-723-3638 or by checking the state web site, [www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/wic/countyinfo.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/wic/countyinfo.shtml)
- Nursing Mothers Counsel of Oregon, which can be reached by calling 503-282-3338 in Portland or 360-750-0656 in Southwest Washington, or by visiting their web site, [www.nursingmotherscounsel.org](http://www.nursingmotherscounsel.org)
- La Leche League of Oregon [www.llli.org/Web/Oregon](http://www.llli.org/Web/Oregon)

- CareOregon's brochure, "Helping Baby Grow up Healthy," with helpful tips is a part of the New Mom packet sent to CareOregon mothers. Anyone can get copies of it on our Web site, [www.careoregon.org](http://www.careoregon.org). Click first to the Spanish language pages, then to "Miembros," "Información sobre de salud" and "Niño saludable." Or connect directly with [www.careoregon.org/spanish/member/mhealthybabiesSP.html](http://www.careoregon.org/spanish/member/mhealthybabiesSP.html).

## DENTAL CARE

- **What about baby teeth?**

Children who have healthy mouths chew more easily, gain more nutrients and have more confidence in their appearance. And their good oral health contributes to good overall health. So it pays to give children a good start on dental health when they are still babies.

- **What should I do?**

- Wipe your baby's gums with a soft wet cloth after each feeding.
- Don't let your baby go to sleep with a bottle or sippy cup.
- Ask your baby's doctor about fluoride.
- Brush that first new tooth gently with a baby toothbrush.

- **What about the dentist for my baby?**

Get a first dental appointment within six months of the first baby tooth, or at least by your child's first birthday. The dentist can also tell you how you can help protect your child's teeth and mouth.

- **Where do I get dental care for my child?**

Multnomah County Health Department has services and referrals to people who don't have dental insurance. Check with your own county's health department.

There may also be dental services that the school nurses can tell you about.

If you have the Oregon Health Plan, dental care is provided through a dental care organization (DCO). Look on your Medical Care ID form for the name and phone number of your DCO.

## SAFETY AROUND THE HOME

- **What can I do to make my home safe for my baby?**

- No smoking inside. Smoking around a baby increases risk for SIDS, ear infections and asthma.
- Install smoke detectors.

- Protect your baby from burns by keeping the water heater at 120 degrees. Also, don't drink hot drinks around your baby. And never warm baby bottles in the microwave.
- Keep your baby's sleep area safe by making sure they don't sleep on or underneath soft bedding. Babies sleep better when they are on their backs. They sleep safer when there aren't a lot of soft toys in their sleep area.

It's always best to talk to your baby's doctor about your baby's sleep area and habits. You can also get information from the national Back to Sleep campaign, which you can call at 1-800-505-CRIB (1-800-505-2742) or check their web site, [www.nichd.nih.gov/SIDS](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/SIDS).

## POST-PARTUM DEPRESSION

- **I feel sad, even though I should be happy after my baby was born. What's wrong?**

As many as half of new mothers feel some degree of sadness or depression. It's called post-partum depression and it can happen any time during your baby's first year or can even happen before your baby is born. Some of the symptoms are:

- Frequent sadness and crying
- Change in appetite
- Numbness, intense fatigue
- Irritability and difficulty with anger
- Feelings of inadequacy. Guilt or shame
- Anxiety, panic or both
- Lack of feelings for the baby, or over concern for the baby

- **What should I do?**

Don't hesitate to talk to your doctor.

You can also contact Baby Blues Connection, which provides many free services to women who have just had babies, and their families and doctors. There are support groups, counseling and information available. You can call them and leave a message in English or Spanish; someone will call back within 24 hours. The number in Oregon is 503-797-2843. In Washington, it's 360-735-5571.

You can order an informational booklet titled, "La Depresión Durante y Después del Embarazo" at

[www.ask.hrsa.gov/detail.cfm?PubID=MCH00274&recommended=1](http://www.ask.hrsa.gov/detail.cfm?PubID=MCH00274&recommended=1)

## MEDICAL CARE FOR MOTHERS AND BABIES

- **I don't have health insurance. What should I do?**

Your county's health department can provide a lot of help.

If you are a low-income Oregonian, you may qualify for the Oregon Health Plan when you are pregnant, and your baby may qualify, too.

- The OHP Plus program is for people who are aged, blind, disabled, under age 19, pregnant or receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefits.
- The OHP Standard program covers a limited number of low-income adults who don't qualify for traditional Medicaid.
- The Children's Health Insurance Program is for children and adolescents younger than 19 living in households with incomes less than 185 percent of the federal poverty level. (This year the poverty level is \$10,830 if there is only one person in your family. Add \$3,740 for each additional member of your family.)

To find out if you are eligible, you can check with the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) in your community. You can also use the Oregon Helps web site, [www.oregonhelps.org/](http://www.oregonhelps.org/). This site helps you find out if you are eligible for a variety of services including health care.

Oregon SafeNet is an information-and-referral helpline that can help you find health care and other important services in your community. You can reach them at 1-800-SAFENET (1-800-723-3638) or checking [www.oregonsafenet.org](http://www.oregonsafenet.org). Oregon SafeNet staff can give information in English and Spanish.

- **How long will my baby be on the Oregon Health Plan?**

Call your Medicaid worker following the birth of your baby. Call as early as possible to keep your baby's health insurance, preferably within two weeks. (CareOregon members can call the Customer Services Department at 1-800-224-4840.)

- **If my baby gets sick, who do I call?**

In case of an emergency call 9-1-1 or take your baby to the emergency room. If it's not an emergency, call your doctor first. Your health plan can help you with the name and telephone number of your doctor, if you don't know them.

- **Where can I call for my baby to get medical care if my baby doesn't have a doctor?**

You'll get a Medicaid ID card in the mail. The ID card has the telephone number for your health insurance plan. You can call and work with your health plan to find a doctor you trust.

**What if my baby's doctor's office is closed when I call?**

Ask your clinic for the after-hours phone number. You can call your doctor's clinic at any time day or night, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.