

Join Atrium Health Navicent in Preventing Premature Births *Prematurity rate in Georgia is higher than the national average*

MACON, Ga., Nov. 7, 2023 – The community is invited to join Atrium Health Navicent in recognizing November as Prematurity Awareness Month, an opportunity to raise awareness about the 383,082 babies born premature in the United States each year, and what we can do to help prevent premature births.

Each year, 1 in 10 babies is born premature, which means they are born prior to 37 weeks of pregnancy. These babies miss out on important development that happens in the final weeks of pregnancy. Preterm babies can have short- and long-term health problems, or even die.

In 2022, the March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card gave the U.S. a letter grade of D+ with a prematurity rate of 10.5 percent, a significant 4 percent increase in just one year and the highest recorded rate since 2007. In 2022, Georgia's prematurity rate was 11.9 percent, an increase over the previous year and the state earned a letter grade of F.

“Prematurity is one of the leading causes of infant mortality,” said Dr. Mitch Rodriguez, a neonatologist at Atrium Health Navicent Beverly Knight Olson Children’s Hospital. “While a number of factors may contribute to a premature birth, we encourage women to receive preconception care which helps identify and modify medical, behavioral and social health risks with the goal of having a healthy pregnancy.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and doctors at Atrium Health Navicent, risk factors that contribute to premature births include:

- Delivering a premature baby in the past
- Being pregnant with multiples
- Tobacco use or other substance abuse
- Less than 18 months between pregnancies
- Uterine abnormalities
- Teen pregnancy
- Advanced maternal age
- Low socioeconomic status
- COVID-19 illness

The 2022 March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card indicated racial and ethnic disparities in premature birth rates across the United States. The premature birth rate among black women in Georgia is 47 percent higher than the rate among all other women. Georgia has the second-highest maternal mortality rate in the nation, and due to a number of factors, black women in our state are three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications.

As part of Atrium Health Navicent’s ongoing commitment to improving outcomes for babies and their mothers, the health system has implemented a care coordination component to support its High-Risk Obstetric Care Management program. Since its inception in late 2022, the program has provided support to patients residing in 15 central Georgia counties.

The care coordinator works with patients to address social drivers of health, such as access to nutritious foods, transportation, income or social support, which may form barriers to care, and aid in bridging those barriers, including linking patients to available community resources.

Atrium Health Navicent provides specialized health care for high-risk pregnancies both through the High-Risk Obstetric Care Management program and a team of maternal and fetal medicine specialists.

If your baby is born premature, Atrium Health Navicent Beverly Knight Olson Children's Hospital is home to a Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NNICU) is equipped with state-of-the-art lifesaving equipment and board-certified neonatologists who deliver around-the-clock newborn care. Housed at central and south Georgia's only dedicated pediatric facility, the NNICU provides breathing support, support for food and nutrition and temperature support and regulation.

For more information about prenatal care services, call [Atrium Health Navicent Women's Care OB/GYN](tel:478-633-1821) at 478-633-1821. For more information about services for children, visit childrenshospitalnh.org.

About Atrium Health Navicent

Atrium Health Navicent is the leading provider of health care in central and south Georgia and is committed to its mission of elevating health and well-being through compassionate care. Atrium Health Navicent is part of [Advocate Health](http://AdvocateHealth.com), which is headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, and is the third-largest nonprofit health system in the United States, created from the combination of Atrium Health and Advocate Aurora Health. Atrium Health Navicent provides high-quality, personalized care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region. As part of the largest, integrated, nonprofit health system in the Southeast, it is also able to tap into some of the nation's leading medical experts and specialists with Atrium Health, allowing it to provide the best care close to home – including advanced innovations in virtual medicine and care. Throughout its 125-year history in the community, Atrium Health Navicent has remained dedicated to enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. It is also one of the leading teaching hospitals in the region, helping to ensure viability for rural health care for the next generation. For more information, please visit www.NavicentHealth.org.

About Advocate Health

[Advocate Health](http://AdvocateHealth.com) is the third-largest nonprofit integrated health system in the United States – created from the combination of Advocate Aurora Health and [Atrium Health](http://AtriumHealth.com). Providing care under the names [Advocate Health Care](http://AdvocateHealthCare.com) in Illinois, Atrium Health in the Carolinas, Georgia and Alabama, and [Aurora Health Care](http://AuroraHealthCare.com) in Wisconsin, Advocate Health is a national leader in clinical innovation, health outcomes, consumer experience and value-based care, with [Wake Forest University School of Medicine](http://WakeForestUniversitySchoolofMedicine.com) serving as the academic core of the enterprise. Headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, Advocate Health serves nearly 6 million patients and is engaged in hundreds of clinical trials and research studies. It is nationally recognized for its expertise in cardiology, neurosciences, oncology, pediatrics and rehabilitation, as well as organ transplants, burn treatments and specialized musculoskeletal programs. Advocate Health employs nearly 150,000 team members across 67 hospitals and over 1,000 care locations and offers one of the nation's largest graduate medical education programs with over 2,000 residents and fellows across more than 200 programs. Committed to equitable care for all, Advocate Health provides nearly \$5 billion in annual community benefits.

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