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African-American Women Asked to Act Now for the Health of their Baby

PENSACOLA -- With African-American babies born in Escambia County, Florida, twice as likely to die prematurely, the Health Department is reaching out to young African-American women to remind them that delivering a healthy baby begins with their own health.

During April, which is Minority Health Month, health officials remind young African-American women that the five most important steps to a future healthy pregnancy are:

1. Stop drinking and smoking – and stay away from others who smoke.
 - ⇒ Get help by joining a smoking cessation class or calling the Florida Quitline at 1-877-U CAN NOW (1-877-822-6669). Details on classes are at www.EscambiaHealth.com
2. Maintain a healthy weight by eating nutritious food and exercising most days of the week.
 - ⇒ An easy-to-follow 12 Step Healthy Eating program is at www.EscambiaHealth.com
3. Start pre-natal care the moment that you learn you are pregnant.
 - ⇒ Pre-natal health needs to be individualized for each woman – it's important that you have a doctor and nurse working with you throughout your pregnancy.
4. Take 400 micrograms of folic acid a day for at least three months before becoming pregnancy to reduce the risk of birth defects.
5. Manage current medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, obesity, or epilepsy. Keep your vaccinations current.

The health of African-American infants in Escambia is important to the Health Department. According to Florida's public health statistics, an African-American baby born in Escambia remains twice as likely to die from prematurity as a white baby born in Escambia. In June, the Health Department will have three events that reach out to African-American women and teach them the importance of caring for their own health.

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