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Livingston County Department of Public Health Promotes Healthy Beginnings Month in March

Howell, Michigan, March 24, 2008 - Good health before pregnancy helps to protect a baby's growth and development. March is designated as "Healthy Beginnings" month, and Livingston County Department of Public Health officials are reminding women to take good care of themselves before, during, and after pregnancy to give their babies a healthy start.

"Long before a woman is ready to be pregnant, the decisions she makes, such as using effective family planning methods and taking steps to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, help her chances of having a healthy pregnancy," said Elaine Brown, Director of Personal & Preventive Health Services.

Once a woman is pregnant, the Livingston County Department of Public Health offers many services to help ensure a healthy baby, especially for low-income women.

"LCDPH offers the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program, and good nutrition prevents many health problems in babies. The best food for most babies is breast milk. Breast-feeding lowers a child's risk for many types of infections and allergies and may also help protect children from some health problems, such as eczema and asthma. Health Department officials encourage moms to breastfeed until their babies are 12 months old, or longer.

"LCDPH is always working to promote healthy babies, encouraging good nutrition, sleep routines, and lots of TLC", said Brown. "Promoting healthy babies also means making sure parents know they need to secure their child in a car seat when riding in a motor vehicle. In collaboration with Safe Kids in Livingston County, we provide free car seat checks to parents."

Despite the best preparation, some babies are born with disabilities. Then, Health Department staff coordinates Children's Special Health Care Services, which provides financial assistance for health care for certain medical conditions, and makes referrals to other agencies, such as Livingston Educational Service Agency, and the hospitals.

As part of our efforts to promote healthy babies, LCDPH offers a public health nurse program called Nurses Welcome Newborns. Every Livingston County family with a new baby is offered a home visit by a nurse. During that visit, families are provided information about infant care and nutrition, growth and development, safety issues, as well as referrals to community resources.

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