

# IT'S GETTING HOT!

## Protect Yourself and Baby

**What Black pregnant Mamas need to know about hot weather.** Exposure to high temperatures is linked to experiencing a preterm birth and having a low birth weight baby.

### What is Preterm Birth/Delivery?

Exposure to extremely hot weather is linked to preterm birth and low birth weight. Preterm birth is when a baby is born early--37 weeks or sooner. Babies born too early and babies with low birth weights are more likely to die in their first year of life.

All Black women experience the highest rates of preterm birth, low birth weight babies, and infant mortality than any other racial/ethnic group in Fresno.



### Why are Black women at the highest risk during hot weather?

Research has found that Black pregnant women are the most likely to be **exposed to long periods of extreme heat**, especially those who work outdoors, but do not always have the resources they need, such as air conditioning, to protect themselves and families. <sup>i</sup>

Black women are more likely to live in unfinished **neighborhoods with less green space** and more blacktop, which absorbs and traps heat, which can lead to as much as a 22-degree temperature increase than surrounding areas. <sup>ii</sup>



### How is really hot weather linked to preterm birth?

Pregnant people are **more vulnerable to heat illness** than other healthy people and newborns are also less able to regulate their temperature than other people. <sup>iii</sup>

Chronic heat can lead to severe dehydration, which can cause **"systemic inflammation"** and affect a pregnant woman's lungs, heart, circulation and "placental fetal exchange" — potentially slowing the baby's growth or inducing premature delivery (Basu). <sup>iv</sup>

### Here's what you can do to protect yourself and baby:

- Staying cool inside an air-conditioned place
- Limiting outdoor activities to when it's coolest (morning and evening)
- Drinking plenty of water
- Checking your local news for extreme heat alerts and to find the nearest cooling shelter in your area

### More Tips!



- **Dress in light-colored and loose fitting** clothing made of cotton



- **Use a microwave or toaster oven** to prepare meals instead of a traditional oven, which can make your home hot



- **Wet a clean cloth and freeze it** to use as a cooling compress

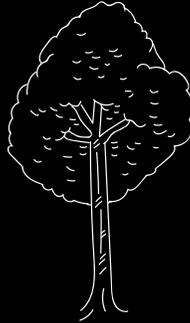
# Ways to cool your space: Recommendations from Columbia Climate School



- Use fans strategically; set your ceiling fan to counterclockwise at high speed.
- Keep your blinds or curtains closed, which helps decrease the heat from entering through your windows.
- Unplug gadgets and small appliances.
- If possible, dry clothes outside instead of using your dryer.
- Replace your incandescent bulbs which waste 90% of their energy as heat, with fluorescent or LED bulbs..

## How landlords can help:

- Paint exterior walls light colors.
- Install improved insulation.
- Plant deciduous trees (such as maple or ash).



Trees provide shade to help with staying cool on hot days.

Adding trees and other vegetation to the neighborhood can also help improve the air quality and can improve mental health.<sup>v</sup>

## Policy Recommendations

- **Plant trees and other vegetation** in unfinished neighborhoods, with priority in the 93706 zip code where Black women experience the highest burden of preterm births, low birth weight babies, and infant mortality.
- Pregnant women should be **treated as a high-risk group.**
- **Help raise awareness** about the dangers of high temperatures for pregnant persons.
- Make sure pregnant persons are **included in local city heatwave plans.**
- **Increase access to safe spaces during extreme weather** by making sure pregnant women know where cooling centers are.
- **Have transportation,** and can access energy assistance and tax rebate programs.

“Microclimates”: Researchers across the US are finding that in poorer urban neighborhoods, often where ethnically marginalized groups live, temperatures are higher because, for example, there are fewer trees that provide shade and more buildings and roads that capture heat.

One study found that land surface temperatures in redlined areas (neighborhoods adversely impacted by the racially discriminatory government policy of redlining) are on average, 2.6 degrees C warmer

than in non-redlined areas and in some cities, as high as 7 degrees C warmer.

In some cities, neighborhoods with higher temperatures already have high rates of preterm birth and low birth weight. Despite this, pregnant people’s needs, and pregnant people as a group, are often not included in city heat plans.” **Source-Fact Sheet: Increasing Temperatures Because of the Climate Change Crisis is a Reproductive Justice Issue in the United States, 2020**

## Partners

This community health brief was developed in partnership with BLACK Wellness & Prosperity Center, Dr. Venise Curry: Fresno GROWS Best Babies Zone (BBZ), Curry Environmental Justice Fellows, and the Fresno Metro Black Chamber Foundation: Growing Opportunities in West Fresno through Sustainability (GROWS).

## Resource List:

PG&E CARE & FERA Program Enrollment

[https://bit.ly/\\_33WoKRa](https://bit.ly/_33WoKRa)



**DR. VENISE CURRY**

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## References

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- ii. Stone, B., Director of the urban climate lab at Georgia Institute of Technology. As Rising Heat Bakes U.S. Cities, The Poor Often Feel It Most (2019). <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/03/754044732/as-rising-heat-bakes-u-s-cities-the-poor-often-feel-it-most>
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