IT'S GETTING HOT!

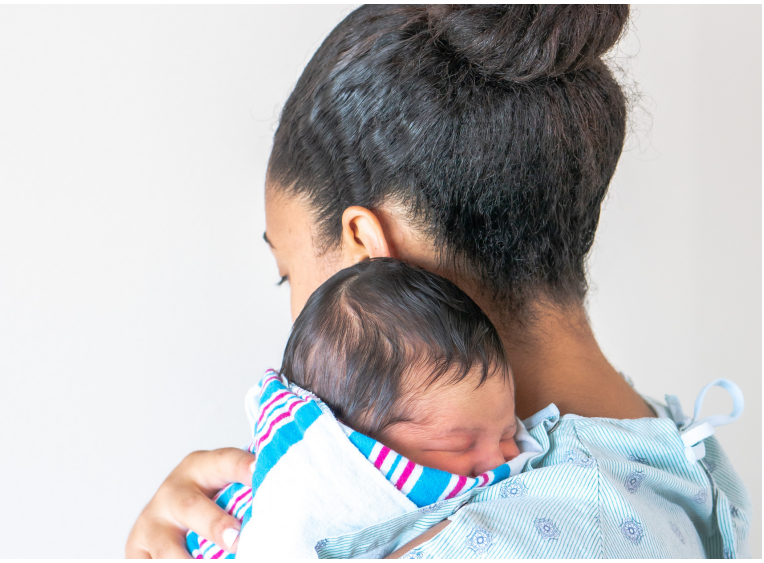
Protect Yourself and Baby

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?

Studies have found that **pregnant Black women and women of color are more impacted by heat exposure than white women.** One study found that pregnant Black women are hospitalized more than other women due to heat exposure. [1]

Black women are more likely to live in lower quality housing with less air-conditioning coverage. They are also more likely to live in unfinished neighborhoods with less green space and more asphalt. **Concrete asphalt such as pavement and buildings absorb and re-emit heat more than natural landscapes.** In both rural and urban areas, these structures can become "heat islands" with higher temperature than their surrounding areas.

HOW IS REALLY HOT WEATHER LINKED TO PRETERM BIRTH?

Pregnant people are **more vulnerable to heat illness** and **infants experience difficulty regulating their temperature.** [2] Heat exposure can also impair your baby's growth by reducing uterine blood flow and altering placental-fetal exchange. [3]

In extreme heat it is easy to get very dehydrated. Constant dehydration during pregnancy may trigger complications that lead to premature birth. [4] **Remember to drink at least 8 to 12 cups (64 to 96 ounces) of water every day** and two to three cups of water per hour, or more if you're sweating heavily.

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

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

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WELLNESS & PROSPERITY CENTER

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. [5]

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).

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Best Babies Zone
Growing Real Opportunities in West Fresno

DR. VENISE CURRY

Resource List:

PG&E CARE & FERA Program Enrollment
https://bit.ly/33WoKRa

References

[1,2] Fact Sheet: Increasing Temperatures Because of the Climate Change Crisis is a Reproductive Justice Issue in the United States, 2020. Human Rights Watch, Black Women's Health Imperative, a better balance, the work and family legal center, Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice Florida, and National Birth Equity Collaborative

[3,4] Bekkar B, Pacheco S, Basu R, DeNicola N. Association of Air Pollution and Heat Exposure With Preterm Birth, Low Birth Weight, and Stillbirth in the US: A Systematic Review. JAMA Netw Open. 2020;3(6):e208243. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.8243

[5] Climate Change and Mental Health - C-CHANGE | Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Urban green spaces and health. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2016