

## Behavioural Prevention for Maternal Health Care in India

Due to existing negative social determinants of health and a failing public health system in UP, behavioural prevention is paramount to keep oneself healthy. There are several basic hygienic principles that help prevent illness and disease. These behavioural tips can help keep a mother healthy and safe during pregnancy, as maternal mortality is a severe threat for women in India. Here are some tips for behavioural prevention and general cleanliness:

- wash hands with soap and water before cooking and eating, as well as after bowel movements
- bath and wash yourself regularly
- make sure you're always wearing something on your feet because there's a chance of getting a hookworm infection, which can lead to anemia

Assuming a woman has become pregnant wishfully, the following actions can help reduce maternal mortality:

- maintain a healthy and regular diet, as you are feeding for two people
- do not smoke or drink while pregnant because it can harm the baby's development, as well as the mother's health
- do not take any medicines that were not prescribed by your doctor
- though rest is important, and it may be uncomfortable to move around during pregnancy, it is also important to get exercise, stretch your legs out a little, etc.

Mothers must take every precaution during their pregnancy to ensure proper health for themselves and for their baby. If a woman has become pregnant unwillingly or wishes to terminate the pregnancy, a safe and clean abortion is the best option. Do not resort to inducing abortion by yourself, as it can lead to many infections, bleeding, and death.

Throughout a pregnancy your body will react and feel differently than normal. There are several things that occur, that are normal for women during pregnancy. However, you must be cautious and address these issues:

- Nausea and vomiting: It is normal to experience nausea and vomiting throughout your second and third month of pregnancy, as well as in the mornings. To help with this discomfort, it is best to eat smaller meals frequently throughout the day, rather than a few large meals.
- Swelling: It is common for women to experience swelling throughout the body, and particularly in their feet. To address this issue, relax throughout the day with your feet propped up and try to avoid salty foods.
- Anemia: Women in rural areas are especially prone to having anemia. Maintaining a healthy diet by eating things such as beans, chicken, cheese, eggs, meat, fish, dark greens, and vegetables will help to make the mother and the baby stronger. Iron and folic acid supplements are especially helpful for anemic women.
- Hemorrhoids: Many women experience discomfort from hemorrhoids. To help with this pain, it is suggested to take a warm bath, or kneel with buttocks in the air.

In addition to preventative care on behalf of the expecting mothers, it is also

important to have partisan and non-partisan support behind the issue. As a result of high incidences of maternal mortality, both the government of India and non-governmental organizations have initiated programs focussed on reducing maternal mortality.

In 2005, the program Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) was initiated by the government in order to reduce neonatal and maternal deaths. The program gives cash as an incentive for mothers to give birth in a facility. Money is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation and is given to health workers and families in order to encourage childbirth in clean, safe health facilities.

While results vary state to state, 7 per cent of pregnant women in Uttar Pradesh received JSY payments and up to 44 per cent in other states. Data also shows that the majority of deaths that were prevented were perinatal and neonatal and there was little affect on maternal mortality.

Another program initiated by UNICEF in 2004 was the "Womens Right for Life and Health" project which targets poor women and children, ensuring they receive health care. The goal of the project is to "provide early detection of health risks and immediate treatment of pregnancy-related complications by competent and qualified personnel" (UNICEF 2004). Results show an increase in the use of health facilities by women and an increase in the delivery of births attended by skills attendants.

A third program addressing maternal mortality is an NGO called Save a Mother. The organization works within Uttar Pradesh to educate women about pregnancy, nutrition, and immunization. Data from May 2009 to June 2011 shows a significant decrease in maternal mortality and neonatal deaths. Maternal mortality has been reduced by 91 per cent while neonatal saw a reduction of 57 per cent.