

October 23, 2023

Meigs Health Matters: Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness and SIDS

Designated on October 25, 1988 by President Ronald Reagan, October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month. In addition to the monthly declaration, each October 15th, people come together to recognize Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day by holding remembrance ceremonies and candle-lighting vigils in honor of those who have lost a baby from, but not limited to miscarriage, stillbirth, SIDS or the death of a newborn.

Dealing with the loss of a baby through miscarriage or during infancy is never easy, and tragically, nearly one million pregnancies in the US (one out of every four) end in the death of the baby. Family members may not know what to say. Parents may not know how to feel. The loss will remain with families and parents forever. There is certainly no instruction booklet on how to deal with the loss of a child. Each person may grieve and find healing at a varying rate, but no matter what, it is important to know to allow yourself as much time as necessary to recover from the grieving process.

Support groups may prove invaluable in the healing process. Talking with people who have gone through a similar experience can be comforting. While it may be challenging for those who've never dealt with such a loss to understand the emotional and physical impact a loss like this can cause, it is important for individuals and communities to come together to support and meet the needs of the bereaved parents and family members and work to prevent the causes of these problems.

When a Sudden Infant Death (SIDS) occurs in Meigs County, the Meigs County Health Department Director of Nursing is notified. She then reaches out to the bereaved parents and family to offer support and resources, including a home visit if desired. Additionally, the MCHD conducts an annual Child Fatality Review Board (CFRB) meeting to discuss any deaths in infants and children birth through age 18. This meeting consists of mandated members: Meigs County Coroner, Family Practice Physician or Pediatrician, Meigs County Health Commissioner-Chair, MCHD Administrator-CFR Coordinator, Public Health Official, Director of Meigs County Children's Services or designee, Director of Gallia-Jackson-Meigs Board of Alcohol Addiction and Mental Health Services or designee, Meigs County Sheriff or designee and the Meigs County Prosecutor. The purpose is to try to determine if there are any underlying factors in the cause of death so that focused education can be provided to the public to reduce the chance that this may happen again to any family.

If you would like more information on Pregnancy and Infant Loss, some additional resources can be found through the Baby 1st Network of Ohio at <http://www.baby1stnetwork.org/loss-support> and at <https://www.mombaby.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/perinatal-loss-resources-for-families-1.pdf> or you may contact Leanne Cunningham, Director of Nursing at 740-992-6626.

