



Stillbirth Prevention Campaign Information and Data



Healthy Birth Day, Inc. Mission and Founding

Healthy Birth Day, Inc. is the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that created Count the Kicks, an evidence-based stillbirth prevention and awareness program. Count the Kicks teaches the method for, and importance of, tracking fetal movement daily during the third trimester of pregnancy.

The organization was founded by five Iowa moms who all lost daughters to stillbirth or infant death in the early 2000s. After being connected through friends and pastors, a strong bond quickly formed between Kerry Biondi-Morlan, Tiffan Yamen, Jan Caruthers, Iowa Sen. Janet Petersen, and Kate Safris. The women decided to channel their grief into stillbirth prevention efforts to keep other families from facing the pain of losing a baby, and Healthy Birth Day, Inc. was given official nonprofit status in 2009.

The Count the Kicks campaign was created based on public health research in Norway that demonstrated a 30% reduction in stillbirth by teaching pregnant women how to monitor fetal movement during the third trimester of pregnancy by monitoring movements on a daily basis. Our program is proven to save lives. Published in *AJOG* and *BJOG*, evidence shows that expectant parents who utilize Count the Kicks have better birth outcomes.

We understand that no one wants to talk about a baby dying. Count the Kicks offers providers and our community a way to have the conversation without “having” to have the conversation. It is a positive and empowering program to educate expectant parents about the importance of paying attention to their baby’s movements and empowers them to speak up if they notice a change.

Research shows a change in a baby’s movement can be the earliest and sometimes only sign a baby may be in distress, and is an indication that both mom and baby should be evaluated by a healthcare provider right away.

National Stillbirth Numbers

Every year in the U.S. approximately 21,745 babies are born still, according to the CDC. A disproportionate number of babies are born still to Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Black, and American Indian or Alaska Native families. A Black woman is more than twice as likely to lose her baby to stillbirth than her White neighbor, colleague, or friend. According to the CDC:

- **1:175** of all pregnancies in the U.S. ends in stillbirth.
- **1:101** Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander pregnancies end in stillbirth.
- **1:101** Black pregnancies end in stillbirth.
- **1:133** American Indian or Alaska Native pregnancies end in stillbirth.
- **1:206** White pregnancies end in stillbirth.
- **1:207** Hispanic pregnancies end in stillbirth.
- **1:253** Asian pregnancies end in stillbirth.

*All national total stillbirth statistics come from the CDC 2021 Vital Statistics, National Center for Health Statistics, and the most recent 5-year average stillbirth data.

How do we report data?

Stillbirth numbers are reported by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC).

As a general rule, we report total stillbirth rates based on CDC data in order to be comparable across the U.S. Racial disparities data is inconsistently available from CDC, therefore we report based on IHHS vital statistics, per the following formula: stillbirth rate = stillbirths/(stillbirths + live births)*1000.

We typically report 5-year averages to allow for better representation of stillbirth rates over time and to smooth out any outliers, especially in marginalized communities with low numbers of birth and stillbirth in Iowa. IHHS data should never be used to compare Iowa rates, either total or disparities, to national or other state stillbirth rates.

How do I Count Kicks?

Starting in the third trimester (28 weeks, or 26 weeks if you are high risk or pregnant with multiples), begin counting:

- Track your baby's movements with the FREE Count the Kicks app or download a Count the Kicks paper chart.
- Count your baby's movements every day - preferably at the same time.
- Time how long it takes your baby to get to 10 movements.
- After a few days, you will begin to see an average length of time it takes to get to 10 movements.
- Call your provider right away if you notice a change in strength of movements or how long it takes your baby to get to 10 movements.



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Iowa Stillbirth Numbers

In the first decade of the *Count the Kicks* public health program, the state's stillbirth rate saw a 32% reduction when comparing 2008 to 2018, according to the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. In real numbers, in the first year of *Count the Kicks* in Iowa (2008) we lost 231 babies to stillbirth compared to a decade later when we lost 144 babies (2018). Iowa went from 33rd worst stillbirth rate to one of the lowest in the nation in just five years. This dramatic drop happened while the rest of the country remained relatively stagnant, according to the CDC.

In the first five years of *Count the Kicks* in Iowa, the stillbirth rate for Black women dropped a promising 39%. In addition, when comparing 2008 to 2021, Iowa has seen a nearly 44% reduction in the African American stillbirth rate. We are committed to reducing racial disparities that persist in birth outcomes and reaching communities most at risk of experiencing a stillbirth.

Iowa families lose an average of 177 babies to stillbirth every year, according to the most recent five-year average from the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. Racial disparities in stillbirth are most dramatic between Black women and White women in Iowa. While our rates are far better than the national average, 1 in every 103 Black pregnancies in Iowa ends in stillbirth, while for White pregnancies it is 1 in every 248*. Black women in Iowa are more than twice as likely to lose their baby to stillbirth than White women. Hispanic and Asian Pacific Islander women in Iowa are at a slightly greater risk than White women.

Our ultimate goal is to make meaningful, sustainable and systemic change that will lead to a world where the impact of racism, socioeconomic status and access to healthcare is no longer a predictor of stillbirth.

We want to bring the same success that we have seen in Iowa to the rest of the country. When we see Iowa's success nationwide, we will be saving 7,500 babies every year.

**All Iowa racial disparities statistics come from the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services and are based on the most recent 5-year average (2017-2021).*



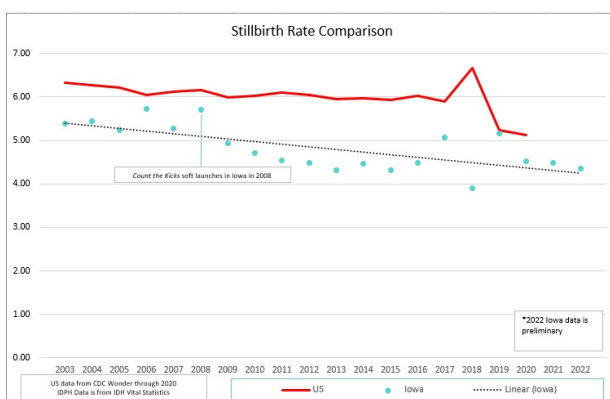
Why are there such large disparities for birth outcomes?

Research from the American College of Gynecology ([ACOG](#)) shows there are several contributing factors to the racial health disparities in stillbirth. Researchers point to the following as causes for the disparities:

- Systemic racism, or the way that society fosters racial discrimination through mutually reinforcing systems of housing, education, employment, earnings, media perception, health care, and criminal justice. These patterns and practices reinforce discriminatory beliefs, values, and distribution of resources that can negatively impact health outcomes. [\[Source\]](#)
- Epigenetics explains how early experiences, both positive and negative, can have lifelong impacts. This type of scientific research shows how environmental influences can affect the expression of genes. Life experiences can rearrange the epigenetic marks that govern gene expression; they can change whether and how genes release the information. [\[Source\]](#)
- Expectant parents of color are more predisposed to conditions like gestational diabetes and preeclampsia.
- Access to healthcare can impact early concerns or diagnosis of conditions and treatment.
- Socioeconomic barriers.
- Education is NOT a determining factor. A college educated Black woman is still more likely to lose her baby than a high school educated white woman. [\[Source\]](#)

What are we doing to address racial disparities in birth outcomes?

As an organization, we are working to address health equity both internally and externally. Internally we have a health equity team on staff, and have bi-monthly DEI trainings for our staff and board. Externally, we are working alongside non-clinical supporters to build relationships with trusted sources in marginalized communities to ensure *Count the Kicks* education is available in many places where expectant parents access information on healthy pregnancy outcomes. These include faith leaders, salons, libraries, community centers and doulas/birth workers.





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Educational Tools and Resources

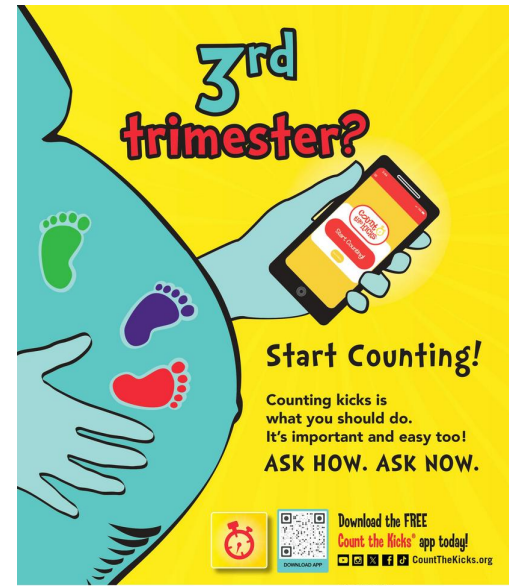
Print Materials

We did not invent movement monitoring but we are the only ones to have developed the full complement of proven tools and resources to help providers have a conversation about fetal movement patterns with expectant parents, through a free app in multiple languages, printed materials, videos, trainings and more.

Beginning at 28 weeks (or 26 weeks for high-risk or pregnancies with multiples), we educate expectant parents to have a movement counting session each day. We want parents to get to know the average amount of time it takes their baby to get to 10 movements in the third trimester. Every baby is different and expectant parents need to know what is normal for their baby. If expectant parents notice a change in what's normal for their baby, we encourage them to seek care and evaluation right away.

Our educational tools — including posters, brochures, app download reminder cards, paper counting charts and how-to videos — can be found at CountTheKicks.org. We recommended giving patients the educational *Count the Kicks* brochure at their 28-week appointment as opposed to their first appointment when it will get lost with everything else they receive. We offer print materials that can be handed out to expectant parents or displayed in common areas.

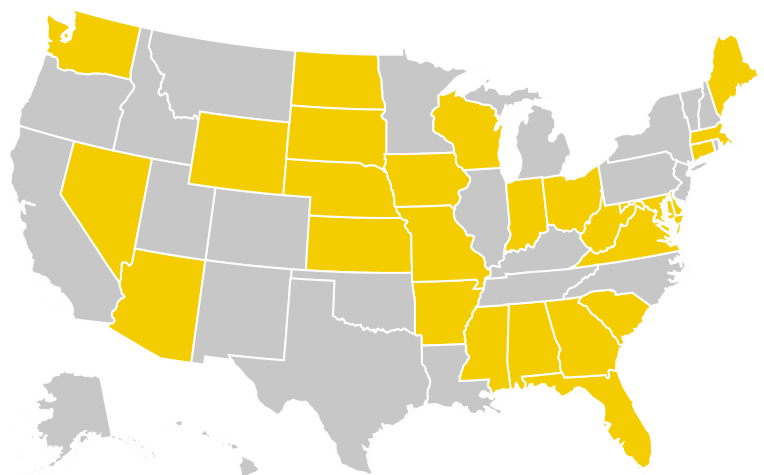
Count the Kicks also offers how-to videos that can be shown during a childbirth education classes, while the patient is waiting for their glucose results or maybe while they are getting a non-stress test.



Count the Kicks has expanded into additional states by partnering with:

- Alabama Department of Public Health
- Amerigroup Foundation - Georgia
- Anthem Blue Cross Foundation - California
- Saint Agnes Medical Center
- Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation - CT, MO, VA, WI
- Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield in Indiana
- Arizona Department of Health Services
- Arkansas Department of Health and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
- Florida Department of Health
- Simply Healthcare Foundation - Florida
- Georgia Department of Public Health
- Iowa Department of Health and Human Services
- Kansas Department of Health and Environment
- Kansas Healthy Blue
- Maine Department of Health and Human Services
- Maryland Patient Safety Center
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- Mississippi State Department of Health
- Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
- Nebraska Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative
- Health Plan of Nevada
- SilverSummit Healthplan
- North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services
- UnitedHealthcare in Ohio
- South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
- South Dakota Department of Health
- West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources
- Wisconsin Department of Health Services
- Wellpoint Washington
- Wyoming Department of Health

State Expansion of *Count the Kicks*



Providers in the yellow states on the map can order FREE *Count the Kicks* educational materials at CountTheKicks.org.



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After a few sessions on the free *Count the Kicks* app, expectant parents will start to notice an average amount of time it takes their baby to get to 10 movements. Parents who notice a change in the strength of their baby's movements or how long it takes their baby to get to 10 movements should call their healthcare provider right away.

The *Count the Kicks* app is FREE and available in 20+ languages!

Count the Kicks App

**The *Count the Kicks* app is FREE.
The app's features include:**

- Available in Google Play and iTunes app stores.
- Web-based kick counter that syncs with data in the mobile app.
- Ability to count for single babies or twins.
- Strength feature asks app users to rate the strength of their baby's movements on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "fluttery" and 5 being "fierce."
- App empowers expectant parents get to know what's normal for their baby by tracking movement and strength daily in the third trimester.
- Ability to download and send movement data directly from the app.
- Push notifications to remind users to track movement, with reminders set for 24/48/72 hours and one week since last kick session.
- Available in 20+ languages: Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Mandarin Chinese, Dari, English, French, Haitian-Creole, Hebrew, Hindi, Kinyarwanda, Lingala, Marshallese, Mongolian, Nepali, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, and Vietnamese.
- Continue counting function.
- Notes function.
- Daily interactive and educational messages that appear after a counting session has been saved.
- The cutting-edge *Count the Kicks* app has been linked to saving dozens of babies around the country.
- "Baby Save" stories within the app and the ability for users to submit a baby save story directly from the app.
- An optional finish pregnancy survey for users to inform us of their experience using the app and the outcome of their pregnancy.

How many babies have we saved?



We have more than 130 baby save stories from families who have written in to share their personal stories about how the *Count the Kicks* program helped their baby arrive safely. Sometimes we will hear several years after a baby has been saved, or we may never hear the story of a baby saved (even though the stories are out there). Even when a baby gets here safely, the timing and circumstances can be traumatic and the last thing these families are thinking about is contacting us.

Research shows 1 in 4 stillbirths can be preventable. In the first decade of *Count the Kicks* in Iowa, the state saw a 32% reduction in the stillbirth rate while rates in the rest of the country remained relatively stagnant.

Count the Kicks Ambassadors



Count the Kicks Ambassadors are passionate volunteers who give their personal time and talent to raise awareness about our campaign in their state and communities. To find an Ambassador in your state, visit the Ambassadors page at CountTheKicks.org.