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WHO

New Campaign Urges Pregnant Women To Count Kicks

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Stillbirths account for one out of every 150 pregnancies in the United States. A new campaign called Count the Kicks is geared at reducing the rate in Iowa.

Mom Jan Caruthers says, "I was like most people, the first trimester, I got through that, and I was like wow, I'm ready to go. I didn't even think something would happen the last trimester." Caruthers' daughter Jayden died after 37 weeks in the womb because of a cord accident. Now, Caruthers is working with four other Iowa moms to get pregnant women to count the kicks.

Mom Kerry Biondi-Morlan says, "We all met in 2003 when we lost daughters to late term stillbirth."

Biondi-Morlan says she, like the other moms, noticed her daughter wasn't moving as much before learning there was no longer a heartbeat. She says, "We were all told that in the later part of pregnancy to expect your baby will move less because there's less room. And, that's not necessarily the case, the movements just change."

They say all pregnant women in their third trimester should lie down at the same time every day and count how long it takes you feel 10 kicks, rolls or nudges. They say you should feel 10 movements in two hours. If you don't, call your health care provider.

Dr. Neil Mandsager, Medical Director of Perinatal Center of Iowa, says, "As advanced as technology is nowadays, really the simplest way for moms to assess their own baby is to do the self monitoring."

Dr. Mandsager says counting kicks is free and can point to potential problems. He says, "We've come a long way from a technological standpoint, but we still have the occasional still birth that's a tragedy to all of us. So, we really encourage moms to do their own counting."

More than 200 babies are stillborn every year in Iowa. Caruthers says they hope this campaign cuts that number in half. She says, "It's just something so simple to do for a big reward at the end."

The moms meet regularly. In 2004, they lobbied Congress to provide funding for the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention to create a stillbirth registry. It's the only active registry that provides stillbirth surveillance in the country. Information from the registry will help determine if efforts like Count the Kicks are making a difference.

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