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Join Atrium Health Navicent in Preventing Premature Births
Each year 380,000 babies are born premature in the United States

MACON, Ga., Nov. 15, 2022 – The community is invited to join Atrium Health Navicent in recognizing November as Prematurity Awareness Month, an opportunity to raise awareness about the 380,000 babies born premature in the United States each year, and what we can do to help prevent premature births.

Each year, 1 in 10 babies is born premature, which means they are born prior to 37 weeks of pregnancy. These babies miss out on important development that happens in the final weeks of pregnancy. Preterm babies can have short- and long-term health problems, or even die.

In 2021, the March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card gave the U.S. a letter grade of C- with a prematurity rate of 10.1 percent. That same year, Georgia's prematurity rate was 11.4 percent, earning a letter grade of D-.

"Prematurity is one of the leading causes of infant mortality," said Dr. Mitch Rodriguez, a neonatologist and medical director of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and business development officer for Atrium Health Navicent Beverly Knight Olson Children's Hospital. "While a number of factors may contribute to a premature birth, we encourage women to receive preconception care which helps identify and modify medical, behavioral and social health risks with the goal of having a healthy pregnancy."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and doctors at Atrium Health Navicent, risk factors that contribute to premature births include:

- Delivering a premature baby in the past
- Being pregnant with multiples
- Tobacco use or other substance abuse
- Less than 18 months between pregnancies
- Uterine abnormalities
- Teen pregnancy
- Advanced maternal age
- Low socioeconomic status
- COVID-19 illness

The 2021 March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card indicated racial and ethnic disparities in premature birth rates across the United States. The premature birth rate among black women is 51 percent higher than the rate among all other women.

Georgia has the second-highest maternal mortality rate in the nation, and due to a number of factors, black women in our state are three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications.

As part of Atrium Health Navicent's ongoing commitment to improving outcomes for babies and their mothers, the health system has received a grant for a care coordinator to support its High-Risk Obstetric Care Management program. The care coordinator will work with patients to address social determinants of health, such as access to nutritious foods, transportation, income or social support, which may form barriers to care, and help provide assistance in bridging those barriers, including linking patients to available community resources.

If you or a loved one are pregnant or thinking of becoming pregnant, preconception care and prenatal care with doctors at Atrium Health Navicent are key in helping to prevent premature births. Preventative measures include lifestyle

modification, supplementation with progesterone during future pregnancies and management of chronic medical conditions.

To find a doctor, visit www.NavicentHealth.org and click "Find A Doctor."

About Atrium Health Navicent
Atrium Health Navicent, the leading provider of health care in central and south Georgia, is committed to its mission of elevating health and wellbeing through compassionate care. Providing more than 1,000 beds and offering care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region, Atrium Health Navicent provides care for health care consumers' through an academic medical center; community, pediatric and rehabilitation hospitals; urgent care centers; physician practices; diagnostic centers; home health; hospice and palliative care; and a life plan community. Atrium Health Navicent is dedicated to enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. For more information, please visit www.NavicentHealth.org.

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