

Atrium Health Navicent Urges Pregnant Women to Stay on Track with Prenatal Care *May is Preeclampsia Awareness Month*

MACON, Ga., May 11, 2023 – May is Preeclampsia Awareness Month and doctors at Atrium Health Navicent want to help raise awareness about the condition which results in the deaths of 70,000 mothers and 500,000 babies worldwide each year.

Preeclampsia is a pregnancy-specific condition that occurs after 20 weeks of pregnancy and affects about 4 percent of expectant mothers. One of the most common pregnancy complications, it is characterized by high blood pressure and protein in the urine. The rapid rise in blood pressure caused by preeclampsia can result in seizure, stroke, multiple organ failure and death of the mother and the baby. Preeclampsia can also lead to fetal growth restriction and the increased risk of stillbirth.

Preeclampsia is more common in first pregnancies and in patients who are very young or are of advanced maternal age. The risk also increases in patients who have a history of high blood pressure outside of pregnancy, have pre-gestational diabetes or in those with known autoimmune disorders. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the rate of preeclampsia in Black women is 60 percent higher than in white women in the United States.

Doctors say the rate of preeclampsia is increasing due to rising rates of risk factors such as chronic hypertension (high blood pressure), obesity, diabetes, metabolic syndrome and advancing maternal age.

“Pregnant patients with preeclampsia often have no symptoms, which can make diagnosis challenging at times and is a big reason why regular follow-ups with an obstetrician are so important, especially in the third trimester,” said Dr. Misti Patel, an Atrium Health Navicent maternal fetal medicine specialist.

Preeclampsia can occur quickly, without any warning, and it can happen to anyone. Women should seek medical attention if they experience swelling, gastric pain, headaches, visual changes or shortness of breath, or blood pressure of greater than 140/90 on home blood pressure monitoring.

A specialist will help balance the health risks of a mother diagnosed with preeclampsia with that of her baby. Delivery may be recommended, but doctors can also help manage preeclampsia through medications to treat blood pressure and, if necessary, hospitalization.

Because most women have no symptoms of preeclampsia, doctors urge all expectant mothers to start routine prenatal care early, and stay on track with regular check-ups throughout their pregnancy.

Through regular examinations during pregnancy, physicians at Atrium Health Navicent Women’s Care Maternal Fetal Medicine play a critical role in helping keep moms and babies healthy. Expectant mothers throughout central and south Georgia can rest easy knowing high-quality health care is close to home.

As part of Atrium Health Navicent’s commitment to improving outcomes for mothers and babies, the health system has increased access to care by offering appointments in Forsyth at Atrium Health Navicent Women’s Care OB/GYN, and offers additional assistance for high-risk obstetrics patients who may face barriers to keeping vitally important prenatal appointments.

Recognizing that Georgia has the second-highest maternal mortality rate in the nation, and that Black women in Georgia are three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications, Atrium Health Navicent has also partnered to host a series of community discussions to raise awareness of racial disparities which impact Black mothers.

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

About Atrium Health Navicent

Atrium Health Navicent is the leading provider of health care in central and south Georgia and is committed to its mission of elevating health and well-being through compassionate care. Atrium Health Navicent is part of [Advocate Health](#), which is headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, and is the fifth-largest nonprofit health system in the United States, created from the combination of Atrium Health and Advocate Aurora Health. Atrium Health Navicent provides high-quality, personalized care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region. As part of the largest, integrated, nonprofit health system in the Southeast, it is also able to tap into some of the nation’s leading medical experts and specialists with Atrium Health, allowing it to provide the best care close to home – including advanced innovations in virtual medicine and care. Throughout its 125-year history in the community, Atrium Health Navicent has remained dedicated to enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. It is also one of the leading teaching hospitals in the region, helping to ensure viability for rural health care for the next generation. For more information, please visit www.NavicentHealth.org.

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