




Expecting a Baby?

Text4baby offers free messages on your cell phone to help you through your pregnancy and baby's first year.

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HUFF POST



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Can Cell Phones Help American Mothers And Babies?

Posted: 02/ 8/2012 8:32 am

I am a family physician and Chief Medical Officer at Community Health Center in Middletown, Connecticut, which is the largest federally-qualified health center in the state, serving over 100,000 of Connecticut's most vulnerable and underserved patients. We deliver approximately 700 babies each year to patients who are at high risk for undesirable birth outcomes. The health of each of these mothers and babies is important to me.

There are many communities across the country that face these same challenges. In fact, the United States has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the industrialized world.

The good news is that there are great tools out there to help. Our health center has started to use a free mobile health service which offers a channel of communication for reaching people who are less likely to have access to information and resources and may be at higher risk for poor health. Text4baby (www.text4baby.org) offers a free, trustworthy resource that we can share with our patients to help their families stay healthy.

The program delivers vital health information to mothers at various stages of their pregnancy and during the first year of their child's life. By texting **BABY** (or **BEBE** for Spanish) to **511411**, women receive free text messages each week timed to their due date or baby's birthday. The service includes information on numerous relevant topics, such as prenatal and infant care, immunization, postpartum depression, safe sleep, infant feeding, oral health, and car seat safety.

One of our pregnant patients is a 26 year-old mother of four children, all under the age of eight years old. She is a single mother who predominately supports her children with public assistance. She has been coming to our clinic for years and we have cared for her through periods of domestic violence, homelessness, sexually-transmitted diseases and financial insecurity. During her most recent pregnancy, she used [text4baby](http://www.text4baby.org) and loved it - Even though she had been receiving prenatal care from us for years, she felt that the [text4baby](http://www.text4baby.org) messages stuck with her and were easy to understand. She became more empowered to ask us questions about her pregnancy, her care and her baby's needs because of her expanded knowledge base, so the information is as useful for a mother of four as it is for a new mother-to-be.

I signed up for the messages when I was pregnant with my second child. Even though I'm a physician, I'm also a busy mom who appreciates getting updates and reminders sent to me, especially through the convenience of my cell phone. And the messages were not only relevant, but they were accurate and just in time!

[Text4baby](http://www.text4baby.org) reinforces the education and guidance that my prenatal care teams provide to families. As both a doctor and a mom, I have been impressed by the caliber and quality of messages that are delivered.. Most importantly, the messages empower moms to start a conversation with their health care providers. It has been tremendously helpful to my patients, as many mothers use text messaging as an important means of communication and appreciate the information, hotlines and support the program provides.

One of my patients received a message about postpartum depression and was reassured that her symptoms were not abnormal. She subsequently felt empowered to express her symptoms to the team and was treated accordingly.

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[Text4baby](#) has reached over 280,000 people with accurate and timely health information that mothers need, and we know that the service is making a difference. Results from the first evaluation in San Diego County, California found that [text4baby](#) is increasing users' health knowledge, facilitating interaction with their health providers, improving their adherence to appointments and immunizations and improving their access to health services.

What I find particularly unique about this program is the unprecedented network of partners supporting the program. These include founding sponsor Johnson & Johnson and mobile phone companies(who make the service free to end users) to the American Academy of Pediatrics and over 700 state and local health organizations.

[Text4baby](#) is an innovative approach to delivering vital health information to mothers. It's easy, important, and mothers love it. As a family physician who also happens to be a mother, I love it, too.

Here's how you can get involved:

- If you're pregnant or have a baby under age one, sign up! Text **BABY** (or **BEBE** for Spanish) to **511411**. If you know a pregnant or new mom, pass the information along!
- Become a partner. Contact us at partners@text4baby.org.
- [Like text4baby on Facebook](#).
- Tweet about text4baby: [@mytext4baby](#).
- Post the [text4baby web enrollment button](#) on your web site and connect more women to the care they deserve.
- Tell a friend or a community organization that you work with about [text4baby](#).