The causes of infant mortality can be related to the conditions in which moms and babies live, learn, work, and play. Communities experiencing higher levels of poverty, crime, and food insecurity, as well as deteriorating neighborhood and housing conditions often experience higher rates of infant mortality. Women living within these communities may experience higher levels of stress. High levels of stress can cause a baby to be born too early (prematurely), which can increase a baby’s risk of dying before they reach their first birthday.

**Across the Nation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Montgomery</th>
<th>Ohio</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>HP 2020 Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ohio Birth and Death Certificates, Ohio Department of Health, 2017

**Public Health Importance**

Women and families can take steps to give their baby the best chance for a healthy start in life. These preventive steps begin before pregnancy occurs, continue throughout the pregnancy, and after the baby is brought home.

**PRECONCEPTION**
- Manage existing medical conditions
- Eat a proper, nutritious diet
- Maintain a healthy weight

**PRENATAL**
- Begin care during the first trimester
- Quit smoking and drinking alcohol
- Know the signs of preterm labor

**POSTPARTUM**
- Breastfeed
- Avoid infant’s exposure to secondhand smoke
- Place infant to sleep on his or her back