

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Death During Childbirth

More than 98 percent of all women who die from complications in childbirth live in developing countries and half of these are in sub-Saharan Africa.(WHO)

In 2008, Malawi had one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the world, with between 460 and 510 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births. (National Statistics Office-2010)

One of the contributing reasons for maternal complications and deaths is the failure by families to space the birth of their children.

In this week's bulletin we discuss how this might be a health risk to women.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the health risks associated with short pregnancy spacing
- To help create a positive attitude towards planning births, having smaller families and using the modern family planning methods
- To promote discussion and dialogue between listeners and other community members about the effects of short pregnancy spacing

The Problem: Short Pregnancy Spacing

It is important to know that within a couple of weeks of giving birth, a woman could begin to ovulate again, and therefore possibly get pregnant right after giving birth.

Therefore, it is equally important to decide and choose the right modern family planning method to use, to avoid getting pregnant so soon after delivery – while the new mother is still weak.

If a mother has several pregnancies within a short period of time, her health could be compromised.

According to a Blantyre based nurse/midwife who opted for anonymity, pregnancies that are a year apart or less can lead to poor pregnancy outcomes for both the mother and the child. She cited the following examples; premature birth, anemia, high blood pressure and uterine problems.

She said it is recommended to wait two years before having another child.

Using family planning methods and spacing pregnancies, is a very effective way to improve pregnancy outcomes.

Use your radio station to help your community understand the importance of spacing the birth of children to increase the chances of a healthy mother and child.

Make the following points:

The length of the interval between one birth and the next pregnancy directly relates to the risk of child and maternal mortality: the shorter the interval, the higher the risk.

Child spacing is one method, among many, by which the health of the mother and her child can be promoted by enabling the mother to rest adequately between pregnancies.

This will help the mother to recover from the effects of pregnancy and at the same time attend to her baby before the next pregnancy.

For the health of the mother and the new-born baby, couples should consistently use a contraceptive method of their choice – and follow this advice: wait at least 24 months after giving birth to attempt another pregnancy and wait at least six months after a miscarriage or

induced abortion to attempt another pregnancy.

A woman's body is often in a different condition from one pregnancy to the next. If the second pregnancy happens less than 18 months after the last birth and is coupled with breastfeeding, the body can be depleted of vital nutrients such as iron and folic acid.

So couples should make sure that they consistently and correctly use family planning methods to time and space pregnancies.

Do a vox pop with a few people from your area and ask them about the health risks associated with short pregnancy spacing.

Conduct an interview with a woman who has found herself in a situation where her pregnancies were not spaced properly. Did she experience health issues? Why did she decide to have one baby right after another?

Invite an expert to talk about the health risks associated with short pregnancy spacing and what couples can do to avoid this.

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