

## **GEORGIA MATERNAL MORTALITY SURVEILLANCE Q&A**

### ***What is a maternal death?***

A maternal death is a death of a woman aged between 10 and 49 years, who was pregnant within the last year. The death can be classified as either a pregnancy-related death or pregnancy-associated deaths. The following definitions highlight the difference between each of the types of maternal deaths:

### **Definition of a pregnancy-associated death:**

Death of a woman, from any cause, while she is pregnant or within one year of termination of pregnancy, regardless of duration and site of pregnancy.

### **Definition of a pregnancy-related death:**

Death of a woman while pregnant or within 1 year of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and the site of the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes.

### ***What are the most common causes of pregnancy-related deaths?***

- Embolism
- Pregnancy-induced hypertension
- Sepsis/infection
- Hemorrhage (usually after an ectopic pregnancy)
- Cardiomyopathy
- Cardiac failure

### ***What are the most common causes of a pregnancy-associated death?***

- Motor vehicle accidents
- Homicides
- Suicides
- Drug abuse
- Infectious diseases
- AIDS

### ***What types of actions can be taken to decrease pregnancy-related deaths?***

There are three main categories of interventions to improve maternal health and reduce pregnancy-related deaths, which are as follows:

#### **Primary prevention strategies:**

These strategies aim to prevent maternal deaths through education and services. Sex education programs and family planning services may help prevent unintended and high-risk pregnancies; pre-conceptional and pregnancy health may be enhanced by implementing nutritional programs and providing health care; and improving the diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases can prevent ectopic pregnancy and intrapartum and postpartum infections.

**Secondary prevention strategies:**

These strategies focus on increasing community awareness and educating women about healthy pregnancy by highlighting what the signs and symptoms are that may indicate problems. This strategy aims to improve prenatal care, labor and delivery techniques and postpartum follow up. It may also involve broadening screening practices to include mental health and domestic violence issues, as well as educating about injury prevention.

**Tertiary prevention strategies:**

The goal of this strategy is treatment of women with pregnancy-related problems in order to reduce case-fatality rates. These strategies involve improving referral of women with high-risk pregnancies to tertiary care centers, improving obstetric and medical treatment of complications and improving practices, facilities and referral services.

***Where can I get additional information on Maternal Mortality Surveillance?***

Contact the Georgia Division of Public Health, Epidemiology Branch, by email at [hbjoshi@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:hbjoshi@dhr.state.ga.us). The following web site may be useful:

- CDC Safe Motherhood – <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/drh/mh.htm>