



**DELAWARE HEALTH
AND SOCIAL SERVICES**
Division of Public Health



Dear Provider:

About one-third of pregnancies in the United States occur within 18 months of a previous birth. Shortened inter-pregnancy intervals are frequently the result of unintended pregnancy. Helping women plan and space their pregnancies is an acknowledged strategy to support healthy outcomes for mothers and babies. Provision of information regarding the benefits of birth spacing must include the potential consequences of shortened inter-pregnancy interval as well as provide counseling on reproductive life planning and effective contraception. Addressing optimal birth spacing in reproductive life planning during preconception/inter-conception, prenatal, and postpartum periods offers an opportunity to provide education, support and resources to help patients and their families achieve the goal of optimal birth spacing.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) has suggested reframing the postpartum visit as preparation for the next stage in a woman's life. Doing so will better prepare our patients for their future health needs. The postpartum visit can serve as an opportunity to address optimal birth spacing as well as engage in a discussion regarding important health issues such as emotional wellness, chronic illness, healthy weight and substance misuse, whether or not a woman intends to become pregnant again.

Optimal birth spacing is recommended by the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and ACOG. The Delaware Healthy Mother and Infant Consortium (DHMIC) and the Division of Public Health (DPH) ask that all providers champion our state-wide awareness campaign to:

1. Increase the number of women who receive education on waiting at least 18 months after delivering a baby to conceiving another pregnancy.
2. Increase the number of women who receive a timely postpartum visit (from 2 to 6 weeks).

Information concerning this campaign is included with this letter. If you are interested in having planned education for you and/or your staff on birth spacing, please contact Heather Baker, Perinatal Nurse Educator, at (302) 225-1020 or Hbaker@marchofdimess.org.

If you would like more information concerning the work of the DHMIC and DPH, please visit DEThrives.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Karyl T. Rattay, MD, MS
Director

David A. Paul, MD, FAAP
Chair, Delaware Healthy Mother
Infant Consortium

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¹ This has also been recommended annually since 2013 by the Delaware Fetal-Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) at <https://courts.delaware.gov/childdeath/reports.aspx>.