



# HOW THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION IS FIGHTING THE MATERNAL HEALTH CRISIS



Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of maternal death in the U.S., or more simply put, heart disease is the No. 1 killer of new moms.<sup>1</sup> Pregnancy-related deaths in the U.S. have risen nearly 140% over the last three decades<sup>2</sup> – cardiovascular disease continues to be the leading cause.

The American Heart Association and Go Red for Women® are doing something about this crisis.

## Increasing Awareness and Education



### Pregnancy and Maternal Health Hub on GoRedforWomen.org

The Go Red for Women website is a hub of information for women and their cardiovascular health at every age and stage of life and regularly updated with the latest scientific findings. The webpage on pregnancy and maternal health is dedicated to providing expecting mothers with information and resources to help identify their risk for cardiovascular disease and support their prenatal and postpartum health.



### My Health is Our Health Public Awareness Campaign

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of maternal death in the U.S.<sup>3</sup> *My Health is Our Health* is an awareness campaign aimed at the hearts of soon-to-be moms and new moms. Through a variety of multi-media platforms, the campaign reminds mothers to talk to their doctors and prioritize their heart health during their pregnancy and in the critical weeks and months after giving birth.



### Go Red for Women Real Women Class of Survivors

This group of national volunteers are selected to represent a diverse sisterhood of survivors, who actively, urgently and passionately champion the Go Red for Women movement. Often the surprising faces of cardiovascular disease, the Real Women share their powerful and unique stories of survival to raise awareness of heart disease and stroke in women and inspire others to take charge of their own health and mental well-being. Many stories from the class reflect stories of women who faced cardiovascular disease during pregnancy and postpartum.



### American Heart Association Support Network – Maternal Health Forum

Research shows that support after a heart event or stroke can improve your ability to make changes to live a longer, healthier life. The Maternal Health forum on the American Heart Association's Support Network allows expecting mothers and new mothers who have had or are living with pregnancy-related cardiovascular health issues to connect with each other and share their firsthand experiences. The Maternal Health Forum was created thanks to the generosity of Go Red for Women volunteer Jamie Zeluck Hindlin, who survived peripartum cardiomyopathy, a form of pregnancy-related heart failure.



### Social Impact Fund – Maternal Health

The American Heart Association's Social Impact Fund is supporting community-based solutions to improve maternal health and reverse adverse pregnancy outcomes. Awarded in communities often hit hardest by the maternal health crisis, this grant funding has supported local organizations and aspiring entrepreneurs to overcome social and economic barriers that can put women at higher risk for developing cardiovascular disease during pregnancy. Social impact funds related to maternal health have supported education programming, breastfeeding support, certified doula training and deployment, and workforce development training for perinatal community health workers.



### Empowered to Serve Maternal Health Modules

EmPOWERED to Serve™ offers college scholarships to students who are passionate about public health, health equity and community engagement. Modules exploring maternal health are driving change through localized solutions to meet the unique needs of mothers of color.



## Health Equity Research Network on Disparities in Maternal-Infant Health Outcomes

Growing rates of pregnancy-related deaths in the U.S. are tied to cardiovascular disease, especially among people of color<sup>4</sup>. To address this issue, the American Heart Association is funding a new \$20 million initiative comprised of a network of special projects focused on advancing the understanding of the factors underlying the disproportionate impact of pregnancy complications and deaths among Black and Native American pregnant people and those living in rural areas.



## Research Goes Red

The American Heart Association's Go Red for Women<sup>®</sup> movement and Verily's Project Baseline's Research Goes Red empowers women to participate in surveys, focus groups and clinical research to help create the world's largest women's health registry and platform for research. Grants are also allocated to help engage more women in cardiovascular disease research. Together, we can advance science and uncover new ways to fight cardiovascular disease. We can help save the women we love.



## Driving Policy and Systems Change



### Postpartum Medicaid Extension

We're fighting at state capitols across the country to pass postpartum Medicaid extension to help provide more coverage for low-income mothers and helping to ensure more families impacted by heart disease, stroke and other serious health conditions have access to health care. Postpartum Medicaid extension has been found to be associated with lower maternal mortality rates.<sup>5</sup>



### Farm Bill Renewal

The Farm Bill is a multiyear law that includes funding for many agricultural and food programs as well as the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The Farm Bill is typically renewed in Congress every five years. Without reauthorization, vital nutrition assistance programs would expire. We're advocating to protect SNAP in the Farm Bill because access to healthy food during pregnancy and after is essential to the health of mothers and their babies.

## Improving Clinical Care



### Addressing Gaps in Quality Care

The AHA and Merck for Mothers, a global initiative that invests in local maternal health systems, are working together to convene geographically and professionally diverse maternal health experts to determine the most pressing needs in the field. This collaboration develops recommendations for ideal and equitable systems of postpartum care and provides insight and feedback to the AHA's Professional Education team on curriculum development.

By integrating postpartum provider education and quality improvement, we can help strengthen maternal health systems of care.

<sup>1</sup>Petersen EE, Davis NL, Goodman D, et al. Vital Signs: Pregnancy-Related Deaths, United States, 2011–2015, and Strategies for Prevention, 13 States, 2013–2017. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2019;68:423–429. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6818e1>

<sup>2</sup>Poorly Understood Maternal Risks of Pregnancy in Women With Heart Disease <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/full/10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.117.031889>

<sup>3</sup>Centers for Disease Control Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System Table: Causes of Pregnancy-Related Deaths

<sup>4</sup>American Heart Association 2023 Statistical Update - Ch. 11 Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/epdf/10.1161/CIR.0000000000001123>

<sup>5</sup>Adoption of Medicaid Expansion Is Associated with Lower Maternal Mortality <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32111417/>