



A Life Course Perspective on Women's Health

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The Life Course Perspective

Health Evolves Over a Lifetime

- Regulatory pathways that control disease susceptibility are programmed during critical periods *in utero* and during childhood.
- Programming results from multiple interactions between biobehavioral, economic, social, and psychological factors.
- Regulatory systems maintain physiological balance, but the cumulative effects of unrelieved stress cause wear and tear on the body.
- Early programming and cumulative risk (exposures to protective and risk factors) shape health trajectories over a lifetime.
- Protective factors offset the harmful effects of risk factors to improve health trajectories.

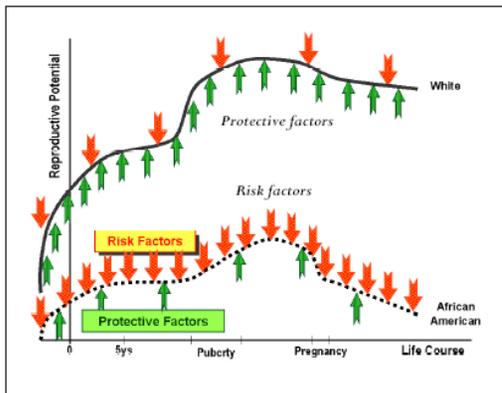


Women start life with unequal health potential and have different health shaping experiences. We help every woman improve her health course and start the next generation on a promising health trajectory.

Urban Practice Collaborative on Preconception Health

Effectively utilizes existing services in a connected, intentional system to improve the lives of women across the reproductive life span.

- WIC Offers Wellness project provides care coordination to mothers of low birth weight/preterm babies
- Developed curriculum for integrating pre- and interconception health into Title X family planning clinics.
- Speakers' Bureau presentation on preconception health for community-based education.
- Baseline data on reproductive health in Los Angeles County
- Engage community with brochures, palm cards, posters, and DVDs. Developed workplace policy briefs.
- Developed Reproductive Life Plan Toolkit for women and providers.
- CityMatCH collaborative of the California Family Health Council, LA Best Babies Network, the March of Dimes, PHFE-WIC, Public Health, and the Perinatal Advisory Council/Leadership, Advocacy, and Consultation



Lu MC, Halfon N. Racial and ethnic disparities in birth outcomes: a life-course perspective. *Maternal and Child Health Journal* 2003; 7:13-30.

What are Some Protective and Risk Factors?

- Nutrition
- Prenatal care
- Stress
- Weight
- Birth outcome
- Socioeconomic status
- Race/racism
- Health behaviors

Differences in birth outcomes between African American and white women may come from unequal exposures to protective and risk factors during pregnancy and different health trajectories over the life course (Lu and Halfon, 2003).

Nurse-Family Partnership



- PHNs provide intensive home visitation from pregnancy through the first child's second birthday.
- Targeted to impoverished, young, first-time mothers.
- Proven to improve maternal life course, pregnancy outcomes, child health and development outcomes, economic stability, and prevent child abuse and neglect.

Partnership to Eliminate Disparities in Infant Mortality (PEDALC)

- Will identify best practices and develop innovative solutions to reduce racism and racial/ethnic disparities in infant mortality in LA County
- MCAH Programs will lead a CityMatCH Action Learning Collaborative comprising the Black Infant Health Program, the California Fetal Infant Mortality Review Program, the March of Dimes and other community agencies.