

## Risky Business

A scary statistic: Black women are three to four times more likely than white women to die of pregnancy-related complications, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health.

That makes preconception health and prenatal care even more important for black women, says Sharon Phelan, MD, a member of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

"For most women, pregnancy is a relatively normal process that we can optimize with healthy eating and common-sense care," Dr. Phelan assures. And, of course, scheduling regular Ob-Gyn visits to track fetal growth and health.

Beyoncé's high-profile pregnancy has the whole world watching

# Special Delivery

By SAM MITTELSTEADT

**EVER SINCE LAST AUGUST**, when Beyoncé Knowles slipped open her sequined tuxedo jacket during the 2011 MTV Video Music Awards to reveal a well-developed baby bump, the world has been on pregnancy patrol. The 16-time Grammy winner and her husband, rapper and record producer Jay-Z, are R&B royalty, so it's no surprise that tabloids and websites around the globe have reported the expectant mother's every step.

Most moms-to-be will never have to endure that level of scrutiny, but many may have marveled at how well Beyoncé is weathering her *pregnancé*. Can we learn something from her? We asked Sharon Phelan, MD, a member of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, for her advice.

### **SHE:** Keeps Cravings Under Control

Although tabloids had reported that she had cravings for everything from ketchup to ice cream, the star told ABC's Katie Couric that wasn't true. "I've been really conscious, and I've been trying my best not to lose control because I've met so many people that say, 'My second baby, my third baby, I learned my lesson.' So I haven't been going crazy."

### **WE:** Indulge but Keep Nutrition in Mind

An occasional splurge is OK, Dr. Phelan says, but remember that it takes only about 300 extra calories a day to meet the needs of a developing fetus. "That's maybe a full-milk latte," she says. "Don't go overboard, and go for quality, not quantity. If you're craving ice cream, buy a small container of the good stuff—not a half-gallon." Overall, what's important is a healthy, balanced style of eating, with an appropriate amount of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins.

### **SHE:** Runs the World ... in Heels

"I still rock my stilettos," says Beyoncé, who was photographed in mid-November stepping out in 5-inch platform heels.

### **WE:** Lower the Expectations

"High heels are one of the worst inventions as far as women staying on balance," says Dr. Phelan. "As pregnant women gain weight in their bellies, they'll need to lean backward to maintain balance, which puts a strain on part of the lower back." Wearing high heels can amplify this effect and make back pain worse, Dr. Phelan says, which is why she recommends sticking to lower-heeled pumps.

### **SHE:** Works Nonstop

In the first months of her pregnancy, Beyoncé appeared at a slew of red-carpet events and concerts. "I have been pregnant through every event I've done, from the Billboard Awards to Glastonbury," she told *Harper's Bazaar* magazine.

### **WE:** Stay Active but Rest

"Women who stay active and walking to the end of their pregnancy seem to have easier delivery," says Dr. Phelan. "Remember, labor is called *labor* for a reason—it's a lot of work to push out a baby!—and couch potatoes will tire out faster." In the meantime, aim for eight hours of sleep a night.

### **SHE:** Had a Pregnancy Plan

"I always said I'd have a baby at 30," Beyoncé said last June in an interview on CNN's *Piers Morgan Tonight*, and she's right on schedule: She turned 30 this past September, just days after revealing the pregnancy.

### **WE:** Plan for Preconception Health

"What you do during pregnancy appears to program your child's health," Dr. Phelan says, so proper nutrition is important even before you discover you're expecting. Talk to your Ob-Gyn provider if you're trying to get pregnant—"two to three months ahead of time is ideal," Dr. Phelan says—and begin taking prenatal vitamins and folic acid, which can help prevent certain birth defects.

## GET FAST, FREE PREGNANCY ANSWERS

Cleveland Clinic's website covers all your pregnancy concerns, from when to schedule dental visits to your options for delivery. Go to [my.clevelandclinic.org](http://my.clevelandclinic.org) and under Health Information, select the letter P.