



BCHD PRESS RELEASE

Baltimore City Health Department
1001 E. Fayette Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Mayor – Oxiris Barbot, M.D., Commissioner of Health

Media Contact: *Brian Schleiter*
443-984-2623
mediahealth@baltimorecity.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Health Officials Unveil “Just Hold Off” Campaign to Protect Pregnant Women, Infants From Dangerous Second-Hand Smoke

BALTIMORE, MD (October 5, 2011) – Commissioner of Health Dr. Oxiris Barbot, the Family League of Baltimore and leaders of the B’more for Healthy Babies campaign to reduce infant mortality announce the “Just Hold Off” campaign to protect infants and pregnant women from dangerous second-hand tobacco smoke. The announcement took place at the National Aquarium during a second-annual remembrance ceremony to honor all Baltimore City infants who have died.

“Just Hold Off” urges those who would smoke in homes, vehicles, bus shelters and anywhere near pregnant women and babies to wait or step away before lighting up. Multiple studies have demonstrated a link between fetal exposure to second-hand smoke and babies being born premature and underweight, complications that increase the risk of sudden infant death syndrome. An analysis of Baltimore’s infant mortality data showed babies exposed to cigarette smoke in the home were more likely to die of a sleep related death.

The vision of B’more for Healthy Babies _ Baltimore City’s strategy to improve birth outcomes _ is to ensure that all of Baltimore’s babies are born healthy weight, full term, and ready to thrive in healthy families.

“With ‘Just Hold Off’, we want to drill home the message in Baltimore that smoking around babies and pregnant women is unacceptable, be it in public, in cars and in the home,” said Commissioner of Health Dr. Oxiris Barbot. “We also encourage women who smoke to ‘Just Speak Up’ to their medical providers and ask for help quitting tobacco use.”

“Just Hold Off” marks the beginning of the second of three phases of the B’more for Healthy Babies campaign. The first phase of the multi-year strategy, launched in August 2010, focused on promoting a safe sleep environment for infants. Through advertisements, a mayoral proclamation, a video featuring mothers who experienced a loss, public events and a Website, thousands of Baltimore City residents were instructed on the ABC’s of safely putting an infant to sleep – alone, on his or her back, in a crib.

Last year, unsafe sleep-related deaths dropped 40% in Baltimore City compared to 2009.

“This campaign is working hard to educate pregnant women, new mothers and fathers about how to safely take care of their babies,” said Kevin Keegan, CEO of the Family League of Baltimore City, Inc., which co-administers B’more for Healthy Babies with the health department. “We are making great progress but will do everything we can to help Baltimore families create healthy environments for our newborns.”

“Just Hold Off” advertisements will appear on billboards, MTA buses and bus stops across Baltimore City. For more information about B’more for Healthy Babies campaign, visit our Website at <http://www.healthybabiesbaltimore.com>.

###