



**Contact:** Britte Nihart, RN, MSN, CNM, Family BirthPlace Director  
260.920.2875 / [bnihart@dekalbhealth.com](mailto:bnihart@dekalbhealth.com)

**Contact:** Melanie Kellogg, March of Dimes Community Director  
260-482-4201, [MKellogg@marchofdimes.com](mailto:MKellogg@marchofdimes.com)



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **DeKalb Health Works to Give More Babies a Healthy Start in Life.**

**FORT WAYNE, IN (OCTOBER 22, 2013)** – DeKalb Health has been working with the March of Dimes to reduce the number of elective inductions and cesarean deliveries performed before 39 completed weeks of pregnancy. “This will give more babies a healthy start in life”, the March of Dimes says. “We’re proud of our expert team of physicians, midwives, and nurses who recognized this problem in our community and put in place policies to avoid scheduling elective inductions or caesarean deliveries before 39 weeks of pregnancy, except when medically necessary” said DeKalb Health CEO, Fred Price.

DeKalb Health’s Family BirthPlace joined forces with the March of Dimes’ 39 Week Quality Initiative in 2012, with a goal of eliminating elective deliveries (inductions and cesareans) prior to 39 weeks gestation. They were very successful with their initiative and have maintained a 0% early elective birth rate since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

“Reducing unnecessary early deliveries means that more babies stayed in the womb longer, which is so important for their growth and development,” says Britte Nihart, RN, MSN, CNM, Director of the Family BirthPlace. “Overall, this project saw a decrease in the proportion of babies born at 37 and 38 weeks and a corresponding increase in the 39-41 week range during the one-year period studied.”

DeKalb Health implemented a toolkit called “Elimination of Non-medically Indicated (Elective) Deliveries before 39 Weeks Gestational Age” to guide changes in early term delivery practices. The toolkit was developed in partnership with the March of Dimes, the California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative and the California Maternal Child and Adolescent Division within the California Department of Public Health. It can be downloaded free from the Prematurity Prevention Resource Center at [prematurityprevention.org](http://prematurityprevention.org).

“The last weeks of pregnancy are important. Babies aren’t just putting on weight. They are undergoing important development of the brain, lungs and other vital organs,” says Scott Berns, MD, MPH, senior vice president and deputy medical director for the March of Dimes. “I commend DeKalb Health for being a champion for babies with their quality improvement effort.”

Worldwide, 15 million babies are born too soon each year and more than one million of those infants die as a result of their early births. Babies who survive an early birth often face the risk of lifelong health challenges, such as breathing problems,

cerebral palsy, learning disabilities and others. Even babies born just a few weeks early have higher rates of hospitalization and illness than full-term infants. Recent research by the March of Dimes, the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration found that although the overall threat is small, the risk of death more than doubles for infants born at 37 weeks of pregnancy when compared to babies born at 40 weeks, for all races and ethnicities.

Through Strong Start, a partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the March of Dimes, along with national partners, has been getting out the word that “Healthy Babies Are Worth the Wait”. The campaign urges women to wait for labor to begin on its own if their pregnancy is healthy, rather than scheduling delivery before 39 completed weeks of pregnancy.

The March of Dimes offers professional and consumer education materials about the importance of a full term pregnancy and the critical development of the brain, lungs and other organs that occur during the last weeks of pregnancy. More information is available at: [marchofdimes.com/39weeks](http://marchofdimes.com/39weeks) and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6XcWBcaliA>

### **About March of Dimes**

---

The March of Dimes is the leading nonprofit organization for pregnancy and baby health. With chapters nationwide, the March of Dimes works to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. For the latest resources and information, visit [marchofdimes.com](http://marchofdimes.com) or [nacersano.org](http://nacersano.org). Find us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).

### **About DeKalb Health**

---

DeKalb Health opened its doors in 1964 as DeKalb Memorial Hospital, thanks to the voluntary contributions of the citizens of DeKalb County. The independent, not-for-profit hospital has achieved many milestones along the way, including the opening of Emergency Medical Services in 1975 and the completion of the Medical Arts Center East three-story wing in 1992. In the last decade, numerous expansions and renovations have brought the facilities up to date, and in May 2008 the Surgical Center began welcoming patients. Comprehensive renovations to the eICU, Emergency, Imaging, Laboratory and Respiratory were completed in 2011. The hospital is guided by its mission to “promote, preserve and restore health” and its vision “to be the healthcare organization of choice for patients, physicians, payers and healthcare professionals.” To learn more, visit [dekalbhealth.com](http://dekalbhealth.com).

###