

URGENT NEED FOR BIRTHING KITS



This week an urgent appeal has been sent out from UMCOR for Birthing Kits for Haiti to be used by hospitals and clinics finding their resources depleted due to the devastating effects of the recent earthquake. Each year more than 600,000 women die from complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Approximately 9 million infant deaths occur each year. Of these, over half (53 per cent) occur during the first four weeks after birth, and more than one third (3.2 million) occur within the first week of life. Tetanus and other infections are among the leading causes of newborn mortality. Infants with neonatal tetanus often have concomitant cord infection caused by unclean delivery or unclean cord care practices.

60 million women (approximately ½ of all births in developing countries) give birth with the help of an untrained traditional birth attendant (TBA) or family member or with no help at all each year. A simple solution to unclean deliveries is the use of birthing kits which can be incorporated into the training of trained TBAs – like those in the photograph above from Camphor United Methodist Mission Clinic, Liberia. Birthing kits are simple kits containing essential items for conducting the clean delivery of a baby. The components of the kit are meant to improve hygienic birth practices following the World Health Organization's (WHO) principles for clean delivery and cord care.

According to WHO'S Six Principles of Cleanliness at Birth, "The hands of the birth attendant must be washed with water and soap, as well as the perineum of the woman. The surface on which the infant is delivered must be clean. Instruments for cutting the cord and cord care (razor blade, cutting surface, cord ties) should be clean. Nothing should be applied either to the cutting surface or to the stump. The stump should be left uncovered to dry and to mummify." One study in Tanzania concluded that newborns of mothers who used the kits were 13 times less likely to develop cord infections than were newborns whose mothers did not use a kit. The mothers themselves were 3 times less likely to develop puerperal sepsis or genital tract infection after childbirth.

You can be a part saving lives through the Birthing Kit Initiative. Imagine a baby or a mother surviving because of a simple kit you helped put together – all for less than the cost of a treat at your favorite coffee shop! The kits are based on research and field trials. It is essential for the contents of each kit to be NEW, with only the requested items – nothing more. DO NOT include any personal notes, money or additional material in the kits.

- One hotel-size piece of soap – to clean the birth attendants hands both before delivery and prior to cutting the umbilical cord, and to clean the mother's perineum. Soap enhances clean practices by motivating hand washing
- One pair of clean latex gloves – to reduce disease transmission
- One square yard of clear 4 mil plastic sheeting – to provide a clean surface to deliver the baby on
- Three pieces of clean string each 12 inches long – the third piece is extra in case the TBA drops one
- One clean single use razor blade – essential for clean cutting of the cord. Carefully wrap the razor blade in paper and/or plastic to protect it from moisture, or from causing injury
- Two flannelette receiving blankets each 1 yd use pinking shears to prevent fraying – one to dry and stimulate the baby, and one to swaddle the baby – even in hot climates babies quickly lose body heat
- One gallon zip lock bag – to package the kit and to be used to hold the placenta ready for safe disposal
- Please box kits with identifying label on the outside (i.e. ~ 20 Birthing Kits)
- Take kits to Annual Conference with a check (payable to the Virginia Annual Conference) for \$1 per kit for shipping costs. Please be sure to give your check directly to an attendant at the drop off location.

These kits will be distributed only to hospitals and clinics with the programs in place to provide education on their correct use. Thank you for being a blessing to mothers and babies by supporting the birthing kit initiative and promoting safe deliveries across the world. Julie Warren RN is available to come and speak to small groups and demonstrate how to put these simple but effective kits together. You may contact Julie at juliewarren1@verizon.net (804) 590 1187