



RYAN DAILEY/DEMOCRAT
A patient in Dr. Hume's office looks at her baby in the monitor as she receives an ultrasound.

ENSURING BABY ARRIVES RIGHT ON TIME

With technology, prenatal care has become more about prevention

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Dr. Roderick Hume of Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare's Center for Maternal/Petal Medicine has seen the field of prenatal care change tremendously in his 30 years of practicing.

The technologies and procedures involved in identifying the risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes have made ensuring babies arrive on time and healthy much more precise.

"An awful lot of what we end up doing is prevention. Because prenatal care, like pediatric care, shifted from taking care of the disasters to trying to prevent them," Hume said.

According to Hume, 3 to 5 percent of children will have birth defects, such as congenital heart defects and major birth defects like Spina bifida and Down syndrome as well as cleft lip and cleft palate.

Hume works with patients to ensure they have a solid prenatal health foundation.

"Vaccinations and real simple things like B-complex and baby aspirin can reduce the risk of many of the adverse pregnancy outcomes that we have amazingly," he said. "About 10 percent of kids will need to spend time in the neonatal intensive care unit, and many times, it's related to those adverse pregnancy outcomes."

One major condition Hume and other prenatal physicians try to prevent is preeclampsia in pregnant women.

Usually characterized by high blood pressure and release of protein in the urine during the later stages of pregnancy, preeclampsia accounts for 15 percent of U.S. preterm births, according to the U.S. Preventive Services' Task Force.

The USPSTF published a 2014 clinical guideline detailing how a low dose of aspirin has been shown to reduce preeclampsia and preterm birth risk.

Modern prenatal screenings also can now identify 90 to 93 percent of Down syndrome cases.

The first step to catching and eliminating pregnancy risks, as always, is screening.

"When we do these screenings, it allows me to pick up about 90 percent of the major birth defects before birth and have the best outcome possible," Hume said.

Hume said these days with fewer smokers, a general better sense of nutrition and more technologically advanced screenings, the prospects for healthy pregnancies have never been better.

"Stillbirths used to be 18 to 24 in 1,000, that number is now down to about 7 or 8 in 1,000," he said.

"Screening for birth defects, Down syndrome and adverse pregnancy outcomes is simple. The biggest risk of it is getting a false positive."

Like any doctor, Hume advises against smoking and excessive alcohol while advocating for a healthy diet. However, genetics can often be the variable that expecting mothers may not account for.

"With preconception counseling, I can order labs to find out what your specific risks are," Hume said.



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