



# Text4baby: An Innovative Free Health Text Messaging Service

## Background on Text4baby

Text4baby, the largest mobile health initiative in the nation, uses the power of cell phone technology to help new mothers and expectant women keep themselves and their babies healthy. Customized health information and safety tips are communicated through text messages at no charge to participants.

Text4baby delivers the information mothers and expectant women need most, reaching them directly on cell phones that 89% of young women carry at all times. The service is for pregnant women and moms with infants under age one. Participants sign up by texting **BABY (or BEBE for Spanish) to 511411** and receive three free text messages a week containing expert health tips and safety information, timed to their due date or baby's birth date.

## Why Text4baby is Important

Too many babies in the U.S. are dying or are not given a healthy start. That's where text4baby can help. The service was created to help address the overwhelming infant mortality rate in the U.S., with 1 in every 8 babies born prematurely and 28,000 deaths each year. The U.S. ranks near the top among developed nations in infant mortality. Some causes for this are lack of access to health information, lack of access to care and poverty. Text4baby addresses lack of health information and access to care. By providing valuable information to women in a convenient, free and easy way, more babies can be given a healthy start.

**"This service is commendable because it merges a common communication tool with free information to help parents provide the best care for their babies."**

**-Senator Thad Cochran (R-Mississippi)**

## Unprecedented Public-Private Partnership with Broad Reach

Text4baby is a free service of the nonprofit National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition (HMHB), created in collaboration with Founding Sponsor Johnson & Johnson, and founding partners Voxiva, CTIA - The Wireless Foundation, and Grey Healthcare Group (a WPP company). Carriers who support the service so it can be free to the end user include: AT&T, Bluegrass Cellular, Boost Mobile, Cricket Wireless, MetroPCS, Sprint Nextel, T-Mobile, TracFone, U.S. Cellular, n-Telos, Verizon Wireless and Virgin Mobile U.S.A. Text4baby is supported and promoted by over 1000 health departments, academic institutions, health plans, businesses and the federal government.

## What Text4baby Moms Learn:

Text4baby sends messages on a variety of topics vital to maternal and child health, including:

- Prenatal care
- Labor signs & symptoms
- Immunizations
- Health care resources/hotlines
- Urgent alerts
- Postpartum depression
- Baby's developmental stages
- Car seat safety
- Breastfeeding
- Appointment reminders

**"I love that text4baby gives out really good ideas for my baby to be safe, and it goes by your baby's age so it's just the right timing....text4baby gave me great support throughout my pregnancy."**

**-Norma, text4baby mom (San Elizario, TX)**

Text4baby works with a **Content Development Council** made up of leading national medical health organizations and federal partners who review message revisions to keep content current and accurate. Messages are based on evidence-informed guidance. Partners that comprise the Content Development Council include:

- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American College of Nurse-Midwives
- The American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists
- Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Health Resources and Services Administration
- March of Dimes
- National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
- Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

**"We're used to hearing about public initiatives that get mired in politics or entangled in bureaucracy, but we rarely hear about services that exceed expectations. So here's one: last week marked the one-year anniversary of a service called text4baby, a service that sends free text messages to women who are pregnant or whose babies are less than a year old, providing them with information and reminders, to improve their health and the health of their babies."**

**-David Bornstein, New York Times, February 2011**

### Sample Messages:

- Calcium helps to build your baby's teeth and bones. Good sources of calcium are fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt & hard cheeses (like cheddar). We want to know which messages are helping you the most. Reply LIKE after any text4baby message that helps you!
- Have you visited a Dr. or midwife (CNM/CM) yet? Call your health plan or find low-cost quality care at 800-311-2229 or [finder.healthcare.gov](http://finder.healthcare.gov). After you've scheduled your prenatal visit, reply REMIND to set up a text message reminder. That way we can help remind you of your next appointment!
- Safe sleep for a newborn is on her back in a crib near your bed. Go to [text4b.org/106](http://text4b.org/106) for more info & a video about keeping baby safe during sleep.
- WIC supports moms with healthy foods, referrals, nutrition education & breastfeeding support. Call 800-311-2229 or visit [text4b.org/018](http://text4b.org/018) for WIC info. You're a busy mom and text4baby can help! Reply REMIND to set up a free text message to remind you about your next doctor's visit or WIC appointment.

### Text4baby's Impact

External evaluations of the service are demonstrating that text4baby is increasing participants' health knowledge, facilitating interaction with health providers, improving adherence to appointments and immunizations, and strengthening access to health services. A study conducted by the University of California San Diego and California State University San Marcos with text4baby participants found that:

- 74% learned about medical warning signs they did not know
- 67% reported they talked to their doctor about a topic they read on a text4baby message
- 65% reported text4baby helped them remember an appointment or immunization

A George Washington University randomized evaluation found that text4baby mothers were nearly three times more likely to believe that they were prepared for motherhood than non-text4baby participants. According to the authors, text4baby is a "promising service in that exposure to the text messages was associated with changes in specific beliefs targeted by the messages." Additionally, 95% of survey respondents report that they would refer the service to a friend.

### Media Exposure

Text4baby has received extensive media coverage in diverse venues. The service has been written up in major publications such as the New York Times, Time Magazine, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, and Boston Globe. Text4baby has been featured on MTV's Teen Mom and 16 & Pregnant, major networks like ABC and CBS, and cable channels including CNN, Discovery Fit & Health and ION Network. Online stories about the service have appeared on [NewYorkTimes.com](http://NewYorkTimes.com), [Time.com](http://Time.com), [AOL.com](http://AOL.com), the Huffington Post, [CNN.com](http://CNN.com), [ABCnews.com](http://ABCnews.com), and others.

**"Text4baby has seized the opportunity to deliver urgent alerts...for example, in California, a text was sent to subscribers living in a certain zip code that was experiencing a pertussis [whooping cough] outbreak."**

**-Time Magazine, May 2010**

### Social Media Impact

Text4baby maintains a robust social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Unique, shareable content is created for each medium for the tens of thousands of followers.

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To learn more about how text4baby makes a difference for moms and babies, please visit [www.text4baby.org](http://www.text4baby.org) or contact text4baby Communications Manager, Rachel Griffith [media@text4baby.org](mailto:media@text4baby.org).