

from polio to prematurity

a history of the march of dimes



march of dimes
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working together

Our work is made possible, year after year, thanks to the generous support of more than 3

million volunteers who donate their time, talent and even their voices to help babies. Donors big and small help fund community programs, and millions of others support a variety of special events, including our largest fundraiser, March for Babies®. Together we're improving the lives of babies and families at home and around the world.



looking for answers

Researchers are working hard to find the causes, treatments and preventions for the

serious problems that threaten babies' health. Just as the March of Dimes funded Dr. Jonas Salk's effort decades ago to develop an effective polio vaccine, today we support grantees working in the areas of developmental biology, birth defects and premature birth.

Premature birth is a huge problem, but we have the innovation to solve it. We've launched several Prematurity Research Centers where brilliant minds work together to find causes and preventions. Investigators include experts in genetics, neonatology, sociology, computer science and even artificial intelligence.

your support helps babies

Your generous gift to the March of Dimes funds important research and programs that help babies begin healthy lives.

Here are some of the ways you've already helped:



brain

We're fighting premature birth — baby's brain needs 39 weeks to fully develop.

smile

We've identified a gene responsible for oral cleft and are working on preventions.

heart

New treatments mean better survival rates for the tiniest heart patients.

spine

Folic acid education means fewer babies are born with neural tube defects.

eyes

We're developing treatments to cure vision defects.

lungs

Surfactant and nitric oxide therapies save the lives of many premature babies.

heel

Newborn screening — a drop of blood from baby's heel could save her life.

caring for pregnant women



The March of Dimes hopes every pregnancy

is a healthy one and reaches out to moms-to-be with local programs that help before, during and after pregnancy. We share our knowledge about nutrition, weight gain and prenatal care, help women quit smoking and even provide health care through our mobile clinics in areas where it's needed most.

educating moms

New moms and moms-to-be can connect with the March of Dimes through our websites, videos and printed brochures to learn about having a full-term pregnancy and a healthy baby. We offer information in English and Spanish, and health experts can answer questions through email. The March of Dimes also encourages moms and providers to wait for labor to begin on its own, making sure more babies get at least 39 weeks to grow and develop.



supporting families

When something goes wrong, the March of Dimes is there to help. We offer information

and comfort through our NICU Family Support® program in more than 114 hospitals in every state and Puerto Rico. Our online community offers a place where families can find information and connect with others who understand the NICU experience.

a president's cause



It was his personal experience with polio that inspired President Franklin Roosevelt to found the March of Dimes in 1938 to defeat

the crippling disease. Success came in the form of a vaccine, and there has not been a single outbreak of polio in our country in more than 30 years.

For the March of Dimes, the polio vaccine was only the beginning. In the decades to follow, we helped to stamp out rubella, pushed for regionalized newborn intensive care, funded the development of surfactant therapy and other lifesaving treatments, promoted folic acid to prevent neural tube defects and brought newborn screening to every baby.

From schoolchildren to scientists, from presidents to parents, from celebrities to citizens, everyone has made a difference. Your support today helps us continue cutting-edge research to determine the causes of birth defects and premature birth. Let's work together for stronger, healthier babies.

Above: March of Dimes founder, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his wife, Eleanor



victory over polio

The organization that FDR built was a unique partnership. Volunteers raised money to care for polio patients and to support the work of scientists in their labs. Within 20 years, the Salk vaccine was developed, and polio was on the run.



1938
FDR founds the March of Dimes.



1941
Iron lungs help polio patients breathe.



1949
Dr. Jonas Salk's lab is supported by the March of Dimes.



1950
Mothers March® volunteers raise money to fight polio.



1954
1.8 million "polio pioneers" participate in the field trial of Salk's vaccine.



1955
The Salk vaccine is declared "safe, potent and effective."



1962
Dr. Albert Sabin's oral polio vaccine is completed.



1979
Polio is eradicated from the United States.

research successes

FDR believed that science must be harnessed to serve people and improve health. The March of Dimes has funded some of the greatest medical advances of the 20th century. Our work has been recognized with 13 Nobel Prizes® and has improved health for millions of children. These are some of the grant recipients who went on to earn a Nobel Prize.



1954
Linus Pauling, PhD, identifies sickle cell anemia as a molecular disease.



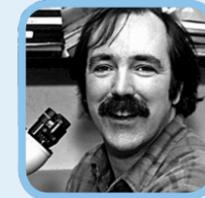
1962
James D. Watson, PhD, identifies the double helix structure of DNA.



1969
Max Delbrück, PhD, shows how genes direct normal development.



1985
Joseph L. Goldstein, MD, identifies the genetic basis of familial hypercholesterolemia.



1995
Eric F. Wieschaus, PhD, and Edward B. Lewis, PhD, identify master genes that control structural development.



2003
Peter Agre, MD, identifies channels through which cells control water flow, a process fundamental to all life.



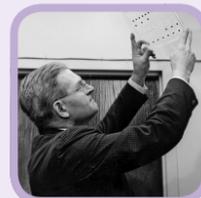
2006
Craig C. Mello, PhD, discovers RNA interference (RNAi), whereby cells suppress the actions of specific genes.



2006
Roger D. Kornberg, PhD, shows how information in DNA is copied to RNA, which carries it from a cell's nucleus to its protein-constructing units.

breakthroughs for babies

Today, almost all babies receive a polio vaccine developed with funding from the March of Dimes. Newborn screening is saving babies from death and disability, and we are working hard to find treatments and preventions for birth defects and premature birth. Here are some of the contributions we've made through the years.



1963
A newborn screen for PKU helps prevent severe intellectual disabilities.

1968
First bone marrow transplant to treat a birth defect



1969
Dr. Virginia Apgar leads efforts to prevent rubella.

1973
Proof that alcohol use during pregnancy can cause birth defects



1985
Surfactant therapy helps preemies breathe.

1989
First fetal surgery to correct a diaphragmatic hernia



1991
Discovery of gene for Marfan syndrome

1996
Nitric oxide therapy treats lung disorders.



1998
Pioneering fetal surgery

2000
The Folic Acid Campaign leads to a sharp decline in neural tube defects.



2006
The PREEMIE Act speeds development of prevention strategies for preterm labor and birth.



2008
All states require screening of newborns for 21 or more serious but treatable conditions.



2012
The Healthy Babies are Worth the Wait® campaign means more babies get at least 39 weeks.

2013
The Prematurity Campaign pays off in 15-year low in the premature birth rate.