



NorthShore Health “Centering” on Better Prenatal Care

Indiana has significant maternal and infant health challenges. NorthShore Health Centers bring an innovative approach to prenatal care and healthy pregnancies. At the Gary, Portage, and Chesterton locations, expecting mothers can participate in the Centering Pregnancy program.

What is Centering? According to the Centering Healthcare Institute, the idea of Centering Pregnancy started in the 1990s with a goal to offer prenatal care to patients that was more effective. It is more than birthing classes. It is an evidenced-based model led by certified healthcare staff that encourages community and communication with healthy outcomes for moms and their babies.

Jennifer Eades, MPH is the Director of Patient Advocacy at NorthShore Health Centers and is excited about the Centering program. “It is the model of care where the patient or patients are at the center of the appointment. They have one-on-one time with the provider, but they also get additional support from the co-facilitator. There are also times with groups with educational activities, fun games that are still learning based, and even guest speakers such as a lactation consultant.”

It is more than just health care or prenatal care for expecting mothers whether they are first-time moms or moms who have already experienced at least one pregnancy. “It is a unique experience,” Eades explains. Along with resources, these moms build relationships with their healthcare providers. “They get resources and make a connection with a provider. What you get in 90 minutes is something you can’t learn in a 15 minute traditional appointment.” Centering includes a health assessment and ten scheduled prenatal visits that range from 90 minutes to two hours. Meeting with other soon-to-be moms covers important topics that benefit the group. It also encourages relationships with other moms going through the same experience.

Eades promotes the benefits of the model’s success. “Research shows that it improves health outcomes with moms and new babies. That additional time with the

provider makes a difference. As a society, we sometimes lose that human connection. The Centering model focuses on relationship building. That is so important. You have to trust the person who is bringing life into the world.”

Because moms establish a relationship with the provider and certified staff members, they are more comfortable to reach out to their caregivers with confidence. They know that they will be available for them when they have questions or concerns about their pregnancy. Eades also mentions that the format of the Centering Pregnancy program is similar to the Centering Parenting program, but it is one that includes the baby and caregivers in the appointments and meet-up activities.

NorthShore Health Centers started offering the Centering Pregnancy program in 2017, but Covid-19 prevented the ability for moms-to-be to meet in a group setting. Today the centers in Gary, Portage, and Chesterton are the only facilities that have certified providers and staff. Eades looks forward to bringing the Centering program and certified staff to their other locations.

NorthShore Health Center is a healthcare provider for anyone, whether they are insured, uninsured, or underinsured. With over 20 locations in Lake, Porter, LaPorte, and Jasper counties, they are working to meet the healthcare needs of the people in Northwest Indiana. From health centers to small clinics, they are making it possible for residents to have access to quality, affordable health care. NorthShore Health Center is caring for patients big and small at every stage of life.

BENEFITS OF CENTERING PREGNANCY (from www.northshorehealth.org)

- Better health outcomes for moms and babies
- Self-care for moms
- More time with provider
- Self-confidence
- Support and friendship
- Learning and fun

