

## *Laboring to Deliver Perfect Miracles*

When she was a little girl, Stacey Garnett loved to carry around her aunt's black nurses' bag and cure the imaginary fevers and scrapes of her baby dolls. All that practice came in handy; today, many of Garnett's patients are the same size as those dolls from long ago.

Garnett is indeed the nurse she dreamed of becoming, and her job is more rewarding than she ever imagined. As the director of maternal-child health nursing at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore, Maryland, she gets to witness daily miracles as she oversees the hospital's labor-delivery unit.

"The care of a laboring woman is so exciting," says Garnett. "Helping them through the delivery of a baby, when everyone in the room is crying or looking on in amazement or yelling, is one of the best parts of my job."

But Garnett knows not every pregnancy has a picture-perfect ending. She also manages the neonatal intensive unit, where sick and premature babies are treated. Although science has made great strides in treating babies born too early, she notes, women still need to do everything they can to carry their babies a full nine months.

One of the most important steps women should take is also one of the easiest: Take prenatal vitamins. "Women should start taking prenatal vitamins if they even *think* they're going to conceive," she stresses.

Seeing a doctor regularly is critical, since pregnancy can sometimes be accompanied by diabetes or other life-threatening conditions.

"Doctors take blood and look at different things, like whether a woman is anemic," Garnett says. "They can also test to see if a woman is HIV-positive. If she is, she and the baby can receive treatment. Doctors will also take ultrasounds to make sure the baby is growing properly and is in the uterus."

Garnett feels a special concern for women who live in the inner city, since many of them are poor and it can be hard without a car to get to a doctor. But it's those very women who can gain the most from medical care, she adds. By contacting a local social service office, pregnant women often can see doctors through the Medicaid program – and learn about other programs that can help them pay for things like groceries and infant formula.

*Garnett, continued on next page*

## Having Healthy Babies: The Science Inside

“Many women don’t realize the resources available to them, and in most cases, because you’re pregnant, they’re free,” says Garnett.

But Garnett is trying to spread the word. Recently, she began to travel to area high schools to talk to students about her job. Her goal is twofold: She wants to stress the importance of good health care to students who may become pregnant – and she wants to encourage students to consider entering the field of nursing.

After all, there aren’t many jobs that pay you to witness miracles.