



Perinatal e-News

LA BEST BABIES NETWORK
Healthy Babies. Our Future.
Presented by First 5 LA



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November is Prematurity Awareness Month

In honor of **National Prematurity Awareness Month**, the March of Dimes organized a media breakfast on November 1st, to raise awareness of the importance of reducing the prematurity rate among Latinas in L.A. County. According to the March of Dimes, an estimated 28,000 U.S. infants die each year before their first birthday, and more than 2,500 of those deaths occur in California.

"Rates of prematurity remain highest among African-Americans. Yet, the burdens from prematurity are increasing greatly among Latinos, the largest and fastest growing ethnic group in the U.S.," said Carolina Reyes, MD, executive director of LA Best Babies Network. "In California, Latinos comprise the majority (51.2%) of births. Nearly 1 in 8 Latinos in the U.S. is born preterm, an increase of 10% over the last decade. If this rate continues in 2010, we would expect more than 125,000 preterm births, an increase of 15,000 when compared to the number of preterm births in 2004," added Dr. Reyes, who spoke at the March of Dimes event. This increasing trend has tremendous implications for the health and vitality of California and the U.S.

Many of the causes of prematurity are preventable. Interventions during pregnancy and especially before conception have proven to be effective in promoting healthy births and reducing preterm births. "By investing in proven, prevention-based strategies, we can improve the health and well-being of both mothers and babies," Dr. Reyes explained.

Such interventions include:

- Family spacing: the healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies, improves the health of the mothers, as well as the health and development of her children. Ideally, births should be spaced about two years apart.
- Interconception care: interconception care provides a unique opportunity to prepare women for subsequent pregnancies. Women who already

have had a preterm baby have a 15 to 30 percent chance of having another preterm birth.

Interconception care provides strategies to promote wellness and reduce identified risks before the next pregnancy.

- Access to medical and support services: extending Medi-Cal for two years after a high-risk pregnancy can significantly reduce the risk in the next pregnancy.

In our effort to achieve healthy pregnancies and births in L.A. County, LA Best Babies Network joins the March of Dimes in observing **November as National Prematurity Awareness Month** and in raising awareness of prematurity and reducing the rate of premature births.

U.S. Obesity Rates Reach a Record High

More than two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese, according to a study released by Trust for America's Health. The report found that in 47 states, one person in five is obese.

Obesity, which accounts for \$117 billion in preventable healthcare costs annually, increased in 31 states. Nineteen states had an obesity rate that exceeded 25%, and no state experienced a decrease. In California the obesity rate remained consistent from last year, ranking 36th (22.7%) in adult obesity; 23rd (7.4%) in diabetes; 33rd (24.1%) in hypertension; and 32nd (13.2%) in overweight youths ages 10-17.

As more women of childbearing age are becoming overweight or obese, they are at risk for adverse perinatal complications such as infertility; neural tube defects; preterm delivery; diabetes; and caesarean sections. Maternal obesity may also interfere with a woman's ability to breastfeed during the postpartum period.

Efforts that focus on promoting healthy weight among women of reproductive age will improve maternal health and birth outcomes. Preconception counseling can help educate women about the importance of preconception planning and encourage women to be of a healthy weight prior to pregnancy.

Learn more:

View "[F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies are Failing in America 2007.](#)"

Women Lack Knowledge of Cholesterol Levels

Eighty percent of U.S. women between the age of 18-44 lack knowledge of their cholesterol level, according to a survey conducted by the Society for Women's Health Research.

High cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease, the leading cause of death for American women in 2004. Of the 18-44 year-old women surveyed:

- 46% worried about heart disease, while 58.3% worried about breast cancer. In the U.S. one in four women dies of heart disease, while one in 30 dies of breast cancer
- 50% were surprised to learn heart attacks kill six times as many women as breast cancer
- 51% either never had a cholesterol test, were not tested in the last four years, or did not know if they had been tested
- 35% did not know that high cholesterol levels can affect people who exercise and eat a healthy diet
- 44% did not know that high cholesterol has no symptoms

For pregnant women, maintaining their cholesterol at a moderate level is crucial to the healthy development and birth outcome of the infant. Pregnant women who have very low or high cholesterol are at risk of delivering prematurely or have a low-birthweight infant. The American Heart Association and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute recommend that everyone 20 years and older have their cholesterol checked once every five years.

"Heart disease is a serious threat to women," comments Phyllis Greenberger, president and CEO of the Society for Women's Health Research. "You can't wait until mid-life or later to monitor and manage your cholesterol level, which is a major risk factor for heart disease in both women and men."

Learn more:

Know the facts about cholesterol, visit the [American Heart Association](#).

View "[The Healthy Heart Handbook for Women](#)," a handbook for women about heart disease.

Funding Opportunity

Support for Public Health Conferences, Deadline: December 10, 2007

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is offering a funding opportunity for non-Federal conferences in the areas of health promotion, disease prevention, education programs and applied research.

For more information, view grant [announcement](#).

Educational Event

SAVE THE DATE! January 23-25, 2008, Eighth Annual March of Dimes Conference for Health Professionals

January 23-25, 2008

"Preventing Prematurity, Birth Defects & Infant Mortality: Current Trends and Future Paradigms"

The Westin South Coast Plaza, 686 Anton Blvd., Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Sponsored by: March of Dimes, this conference is designed to highlight the continuum of perinatal health care and its impact on the most common causes of perinatal morbidity and mortality. Keynote speakers include: Robert White, MD, "Designing Nurturing Environments in the NICU;" Peter Scheidt, MD, "The National Children's Study - Where Are We Now?;" and Bernadette Melnyk, PhD, RN, "Igniting Evidence-based Practice in Clinical Settings."

For more information or to register, view [pamphlet](#).

See our Web [News & Events](#) section for additional events.

We invite you to contribute story ideas and event listings for our consideration in *Perinatal e-News*. To submit items please e-mail contact@labestbabies.org.

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