



Perinatal e-News

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



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www.LABestBabies.org

Issue #32

- Women's Postpartum Experiences
- Breastmilk and Cholesterol
- Stress and Pregnancy
- Latinos Lack Primary Healthcare Provider

September is National Cholesterol Education Month

Report Highlights Women's Postpartum Experiences

Childbirth Connection has released "New Mothers Speak Out, National Survey Results Highlight Women's Postpartum Experiences." This report identifies the challenges mothers face during the first 18 months after giving birth.

"Postpartum mothers experience a troubling burden of physical and emotional health challenges after giving birth" says Maureen Corry, MPH, executive director of Childbirth Connection. "Although many of these problems abate over time, far too many women were still experiencing them from 6 to 18 months after birth. With more than 4.3 million births each year in the U.S., it is an urgent priority to better understand the reason for these challenges, their implications for women and their families."

Key highlights include:

- mother's well-being: access to a regular healthcare provider and caring for baby
- child's well-being: child health, co-sleeping and breastfeeding trends
- family and relationships: marital status and shared child care responsibilities
- employment, maternity leave and child care.

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.

Promoting health beyond pregnancy is a strategy implemented by Network members, through the Best Babies Collaboratives. The collaborative aims to work with women for at least two years postpartum in order to help them obtain comprehensive interconception care (care between pregnancies), minimize risks and develop a healthy lifestyle should they choose to have another child.

For more information about the Best Babies Collaboratives, visit www.labestbabies.org/bbc/bbc.htm.

View the report "[New Mothers Speak Out, National Survey Results Highlight Women's Postpartum Experiences.](#)"

Breastmilk May Lower Cholesterol Levels

Exclusively breastfed babies may have lower cholesterol levels in adulthood than formula fed babies, according to a study published in the August 2008 issue of *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

The study, which re-affirms the long-term benefits of breastmilk, reviewed previous data on more than 17,000 individuals. Of these, 12,890 were breastfed and 4,608 were formula fed.

According to the researchers, the lower cholesterol levels in adulthood are a result of the synthesis of the high cholesterol content found naturally in breastmilk. The researchers also emphasize maintaining a healthy diet and active lifestyle to help lower cholesterol.

Learn more:

View the report, "[Does Initial Breastfeeding Lead to Lower Blood Cholesterol in Adult Life? A Quantitative Review of the Evidence.](#)"

Stress and Pregnancy

Pregnancy and the birth of a child can be a joyous yet stressful event. High levels of stress can lead to various birth complications such as poor fetal growth and preterm birth.

Ideally, stress needs to be managed before pregnancy. Preconception counseling can help educate women about the importance of reducing psychosocial stresses during pregnancy.

LA Best Babies Network recommends that healthcare providers use the following procedure to screen for maternal stress:

- identify women experiencing high levels of stress
- determine the stressful source
- refer to appropriate services such as social support and prenatal and parenting classes.

Women are encouraged to take simple steps to reduce the effects of stress, such interventions include:

- eating nutritious and healthy foods regularly
- resting when needed

- meditation or relaxation techniques such as listening to music or writing
- exercise or yoga
- discontinuing the use of substances such as tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

Learn more:

View the Network's fact sheet on [maternal stress](#).

View the Network's article "[Managing Maternal Stress](#)."

Many Latinos Lack a Primary Healthcare Provider

Approximately 25% of U.S. Latinos lack a primary healthcare provider, according to a joint report released by the Pew Hispanic Center and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Given that Latinos comprise 15% of the U.S. population, "preventive care and regular health monitoring are essential in maintaining good long-term health and limiting the severity of chronic diseases."

The report found that among Latinos, men, young adults, high school graduates, the uninsured and the unassimilated (defined in the study as predominantly Spanish speakers, who have been in the U.S. for a shorter period of time) are less likely to have a primary healthcare provider.

According to the report:

- 42% of the uninsured lack a primary healthcare provider
- 37% of adults ages 18-29 lack regular health care
- 83% obtain their healthcare information from the media
- 70% receive health information from family, friends or the community
- 8% say they seek medical care outside the U.S.

The report also found that Latinos are less likely to have access to a primary healthcare provider because they:

- report that they do not feel sick (41%)
- are uninsured (17%)
- prefer to self-treat (13%)
- can not afford medical treatment (11%).

The report underscores the importance of developing healthcare policies that will address racial disparities and universal health care. Also, culturally competent healthcare providers are needed to improve individual perceptions

involving medical care.

Creating access to a continuum of quality care is a key strategy of LA Best Babies Network through the Healthy Births Care Quality Collaborative and Best Babies Collaboratives. The collaboratives, who provide direct services to 7,063 Latinas in L.A. County, are working to ensure that high-quality perinatal care and social support are available to all families throughout L.A. County.

For more information on the Healthy Births Care Quality Collaborative, visit www.labestbabies.org/cqi/cqi.htm.

For more information on the Best Babies Collaboratives, visit www.labestbabies.org/bbc/bbc.htm.

View the report "[Hispanics and Health Care in the United States: Access, Information and Knowledge](#)."

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