



# Perinatal e-News

LA BEST BABIES NETWORK



Healthy Babies. Our Future.  
Presented by First 5 LA



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[www.LABestBabies.org](http://www.LABestBabies.org)

## Issue #34

- **November is Prematurity Awareness Month**

### November is Prematurity Awareness Month

Citing prematurity as the leading killer of America's infants, the March of Dimes has named November Prematurity Awareness Month and November 12th as Prematurity Awareness Day. Each year in the U.S. nearly 500,000 babies are born prematurely. Between 1981 and 2003, the national rate of premature births rose from 9.4% to 12.3%, an increase of almost 31%.

In L.A. County:

- More than 15,000 babies are born prematurely each year.
- More than 10,000 babies are born each year weighing 5.5 pounds or less.
- African-Americans have the highest rates of both infant mortality and babies with low birthweight of all ethnic groups countywide.
- More than half the infants who die in the county are Latino.

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](mailto:contact@labestbabies.org).

### Advancing Prevention-Based Strategies

LA Best Babies Network is focusing its efforts on proven, prevention-based strategies to improve the health and well-being of mothers and babies. Interventions before conception, during pregnancy and in the first two years following birth have been proven effective in promoting healthy births and reducing preterm births. These 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% 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 makes it possible for low-income women to receive needed medical care and significantly reduce the associated risk in the next pregnancy. The Network is working to galvanize support for extending Medi-Cal coverage to two years postpartum.

Providing quality perinatal healthcare: supporting clinical practices to learn and implement strategies and skills to change the healthcare system so it supports the delivery of evidence-based clinical care. On average, it takes 17 years for clinical practices proven as beneficial through research to be integrated into general clinical practice. Efforts dedicated to changing organizational systems can shorten this time from discovery to routine prenatal care.

In our effort to achieve healthy pregnancies and births in L.A. County, LA Best Babies Network is working to create a continuum of quality care for families with the Network's collaboratives:

- The **Best Babies Collaboratives** consist of more than 40 agencies that work together to provide seamless care to high-risk moms during and following pregnancy (also known as interconception care) through intensive case management. Linking families to quality perinatal care, preventive care and social support services greatly enhances their health and well-being.
- The **Healthy Births Care Quality Collaborative** promotes continual and shared learning to provide the best care for women. In partnership with Network members, 11 participating clinics learn how to improve the healthcare system itself and the delivery of evidence-based care; engage women and families in the management of their care; track performance on key indicators of quality care; and make systems improvements as needed.

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