



# 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 #36

- **Folic Acid: A Vitamin for All Women**
- **Community-Based Disease Prevention**
- **Improving Prenatal and Maternity Care**

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January 5-11, 2009 is  
National Folic Acid  
Awareness Week

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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).

## Folic Acid: A Vitamin for All Women

Approximately 3,000 U.S. infants are born with **neural tube defects** (birth defects of the brain and spine) each year. Taking **folic acid**, a B vitamin, at least three months before pregnancy can prevent up to 70 percent of neural tube defects. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all women take a multivitamin with folic acid every day.

Folic acid, also called folate, also is found in enriched breads and **cereals**. All women should take at least 400 micrograms of folic acid every day. Women who already have a child with neural tube defects are advised to take 4 grams of folic acid every day.

Among all racial and ethnic groups in this country, Hispanic women have the least awareness and consumption of folic acid, according to the CDC. While Hispanic babies are 1.5 to 2 times more likely than other babies to have neural tube defects, only 21 percent of Hispanic women take enough folic acid (compared with 40 percent of white women).

Please join LA Best Babies Network in informing all women about the benefits of folic acid.

Learn more:  
View the Network's "Healthy Families" Web page on [folic acid](#).

Folic Acid Materials: The CDC has created new folic acid promotion Spanish materials for the 2009 Folic Acid Awareness Week. To order, [please visit here](#).

For ideas on using these materials, please visit the National Council on Folic Acid's site [National Folic Acid Awareness Week](#).

## Community-Based Disease Prevention Would Save Money and Improve Health in California

Did you know that an investment of \$10 per person, per year, in community-based disease prevention programs would save California's healthcare system \$1.7 billion within five years? That's a return of \$4.80 for every \$1 spent on such programs that improve health. This key finding is highlighted in [Prevention for a Healthier California: Investments in Disease Prevention Yield Significant Savings, Stronger Communities](#), a report released by the Trust for America's Health, the Prevention Institute and The California Endowment.

Examples of community-based disease prevention programs include making fresh fruits and vegetables readily available in communities, creating safe havens for children to play and exercise, and implementing smoke-free laws. The report's researchers found that implementing programs that promote physical activity, improve nutrition and prevent use of tobacco products could reduce rates of:

- type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure by 5% within two years
- kidney disease and stroke by 5% within five years
- chronic obstructive pulmonary disease by 2.5% within 10 to 20 years.

### How LA Best Babies Network is Making a Difference

Investing in disease prevention is a key strategy of LA Best Babies Network and its members. For example:

- Promoting a healthy lifestyle and diabetes management among mothers-to-be reduces the risk of birth defects, miscarriage, premature birth and other newborn complications.

Through the Network's [Healthy Births Care Quality Collaborative](#), 11 participating clinics enhance screening efforts with the goals of early detection, treatment and prevention of conditions such as diabetes. With the support of Network members, these clinics learn how to improve the healthcare system itself and the delivery of evidence-based care, as well as engage women and families in the management of their care.

- Compared with women who don't smoke, women who smoke

during pregnancy have a 30% higher risk of having a baby who is born premature and are nearly twice as likely to have a baby with low birth weight. Smoking cessation programs such as the California Smokers Helpline 1-800-NO-BUTTS are effective in helping pregnant women quit. View the Network's "Healthy Families" Web page on [smoking and health](#).

- Recognizing the need for outreach, social support and health education, the Network supports intensive maternal and child health case management through its **Best Babies Collaboratives**. Case managers help connect clients to important services and resources such as smoking cessation programs, psychosocial support, nutritional counseling, food banks and housing programs. The Best Babies Collaboratives are comprised of more than 40 agencies in L.A. County's priority communities that are working together to improve and expand coordinated interconception care (care between pregnancies).

Learn more about how the Best Babies Collaborative and its partners successfully launched walking clubs and promoted YMCA exercise programs among community members in Long Beach in the article "[A Fitness Revolution in Long Beach](#)."

Learn more:

View the Network's "[Healthy Families](#)" Web pages.

*[Prevention for a Healthier California: Investments in Disease Prevention Yield Significant Savings, Stronger Communities](#)*

[Prevention Institute](#)

[The California Endowment](#)

### **Report Offers Recommendations to Promote Evidence-Based Maternity Care**

The report, *[Evidence-Based Maternity Care: What It Is and What It Can Achieve](#)*, examines how maternity care is delivered, financed and experienced by families and healthcare payers. According to the report, there are serious problems in maternity care quality and value. The report's main recommendation is that health systems adopt evidence-based maternity care.

To close the evidence-practice gap, the report recommends:

- developing "a standardized evidence-based set of maternity care measures to address overuse and underuse."
- incorporating "these measures into Medicaid quality improvement activities, and encourage private insurers and other entities to adopt them."
- reforming "the reimbursement system -- with such strategies as reducing payment for underused services, and rewarding high-performing providers and facilities"
- supporting "more research into evidence-based maternity care, including long-term effects of common maternity practices."
- increasing "the use of evidence-based maternity care by educating a wide range of stakeholders."

### How LA Best Babies Network is Helping Enhance Care

Improving prenatal care will improve the maternity care experience for families. The Network's Healthy Births Care Quality Collaborative is a cooperative effort among caregivers to:

- Integrate evidence-based care into routine prenatal care
- Record progress by developing and tracking quality measures in prenatal care
- Empower women to build skills that will help them manage their own health care (See the article "[Transforming Patient Care](#)")
- Provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care
- Promote continual learning to provide the best care for patients and to improve the healthcare system itself and the delivery of care.

Learn More:

Read [Evidence-Based Maternity Care: What It Is and What It Can Achieve](#) released by Childbirth Connection, The Reforming States Group and the Milbank Memorial Foundation

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