



Perinatal e-News

LA BEST BABIES NETWORK



Healthy Babies. Our Future.
Presented by First 5 LA



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Obesity During Pregnancy Associated with Increased Risk of Birth Defects

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Studies show that women who were obese before they became pregnant had a higher risk of having babies with certain birth defects, including missing limbs, malformed hearts and underdeveloped spinal cords, according to a report in the February 11, 2009, issue of *JAMA* (Journal of the American Medical Association). [See JAMA's news release.](#)

Innovative Breastfeeding Promotion Campaign

Obesity is a major public health and economic concern. The study advises that overweight women planning to get pregnant should try to lose weight sensibly and carefully prior to becoming pregnant. All women are advised to take 400 micrograms of folic acid daily before pregnancy and during pregnancy to reduce the chances of having and infant with brain and spinal cord birth defects. Women are advised not to try fad diets.

American Diabetes Alert Day is Tuesday, March 24, 2009

National Nutrition Month® - The theme for March 2009 is "Eat Right."

Obesity is a condition in which excess body fat has accumulated to an extent that a person's health may be negatively affected. It is commonly defined as a body mass index (BMI) of 30 (kg/m²) or higher. This distinguishes it from being overweight as defined by a BMI of over 26 (kg/m²) or higher. The National Women's Health Information Center reports that 50% of women aged 20 to 74 are overweight or obese in the U.S.

How LA Best Babies Network is Making a Difference

In response to this health concern, the Network's Healthy Births Care Quality Collaborative uses strategies to regularly monitor the body mass index and refer patients for dietary education and counseling services to foster healthy weight gain during pregnancy. Several of the collaborative clinics are recording 100% of patients' BMI results. See "Leaders Raise the Bar for Quality Care" in the Network's [Perinatal Connections](#).

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.

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

Learn More

[General Information on Diabetes and Pregnancy](#)

["Maternal Obesity Heightens Risk of Birth Defects"](#)

Innovative Breastfeeding Promotion Campaign

In Marin County, Calif. the Marin Breastfeeding Coalition has launched a unique breastfeeding awareness campaign that features life-like cutouts of women breastfeeding their babies. Launched on January 28, 2009, the campaign's goal is to encourage breastfeeding and promote the acceptance of breastfeeding in public. The life-like cutouts made their debut at a shopping center.

The Marin Breastfeeding Coalition wants to educate the public that breastfeeding in public is perfectly acceptable and that it is protected by law. They would like for everyone to notice the campaign and ask themselves why they were paying so much attention to a mother feeding her baby. Each cut-out figure holds a card that reads: "When breastfeeding is accepted, it won't be noticed."

The Benefits of Breastfeeding

Human milk is considered to be the best nutrition for infants. Studies show that breastfeeding has a protective effect on the control of diabetes, reduction of ovarian and breast cancer, reduction of osteoporosis and hip fractures, and support for birth spacing for women who breastfeed. For infants, breastfeeding reduces the incidence of illness and medical care visits.

Unfortunately, significant barriers contribute to the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding by new mothers. According to *The Hospital Breastfeeding Report, 2007*, the prevalence for exclusive

breastfeeding at the time of hospital discharge in LA County is under 25%. This exclusive breastfeeding rate placed LA County 47th out of 50 counties in California. Returning to work is one of the reasons for discontinuing exclusive breastfeeding. Given that 60% of women return to the workplace within the first year after childbirth, workplace policies that support breastfeeding can contribute to sustaining breastfeeding through the recommended first year of life.

How LA Best Babies Network is Making a Difference

The Network received a two-year grant to design and plan the implementation of a universal home visitation pilot. The pilot, which is a component of First 5 LA's [Best Start LA](#), will be launched in July 2009.

In the pilot program (known as "Welcome, Baby!") community health workers and registered nurses conduct a series of prenatal, hospital and residence meetings for all expectant families living in a Best Start community. One of the Welcome, Baby! program objectives is to provide families the support they need to increase breastfeeding, ensure they receive appropriate health and developmental care, and improve their connections to resources and services in their community.

Learn more

View the Network's brochure [Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace Policies](#) and [template](#) that employers can customize.

Information about the [Welcome, Baby!](#) Program

["New Breastfeeding Campaign Turns Heads"](#)

["Breastfeeding Campaign Goes Live in Marin"](#)

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