



# 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)

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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).

## Moms Who Breastfeed Less Likely to Neglect Child

Breastfeeding is nature's way of reinforcing the physical and emotional bond between mother and child, thereby reducing the risk that a mother will later neglect her child. The recent Australian study, "[Moms Who Breastfeed Less Likely to Neglect Child](#)" (01/26/2009, *HealthDay*) found that babies who were breastfed for more than four months had a reduced risk of neglect by their mothers when compared to those who were breastfed for a shorter period, or not at all, regardless of a mother's health or socioeconomic status.

During breastfeeding, the mother produces the hormone oxytocin, which helps foster attachment and promote maternal behaviors, behaviors necessary for the optimal development of the child, including providing for physical, emotional, and cognitive well-being.

Neglect, defined as the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, is a form of abuse that is more common than all other forms of child abuse combined. Community prevention efforts tend to be focused on messaging, education, and improving individual parenting skills. Home visitation, with an emphasis on parent education, is one strategy that can help prevent neglect.

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

LA Best Babies Network is at the forefront of promoting the benefits of breastfeeding through its collaboratives and programs.

The [Healthy Births Care Quality Collaborative](#) promotes continuous and shared learning to provide the best care for women. In partnership with Network members, 10 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.

Increasing initiation of exclusive breastfeeding or feeding of breast milk by 50% above the baseline is a key aim of the collaborative. By providing women with breastfeeding education throughout the prenatal period and support in the first week postpartum, 35% of women are now exclusively breastfeeding compared to the clinics' baseline of approximately 18%.

The SPA 1 [Healthy Births Learning Collaborative](#) (HBLC) is currently focusing its efforts on encouraging mothers to breastfeed

their babies in the first two months of life. The SPA 1 HBLC is using information obtained from a community-developed focus group and survey to assist in improving the breastfeeding rates in the Antelope Valley area.

In addition, the Network is working with First 5 LA to design and plan the implementation of a **universal home visitation pilot program**, known as "[Welcome, Baby!](#)" In the pilot, community health workers and registered nurses conduct a series of prenatal, hospital and residence meetings for all expectant families living in a [Best Start LA](#) 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. The [Welcome, Baby!](#) program will educate and inform parents, through a variety of media, about the health, social, and economic benefits of breastfeeding, and how these benefits are linked to the mother-child emotional and physical bonding necessary for a baby's optimal development.

#### **Learn more**

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

### **Prenatal Home Visitation Shows Promise in Reducing Low Birthweight**

Authors of a study in the *American Journal of Pediatric Medicine* (February 2009) concluded that a prenatal home visitation program with a focus on social support, health education, and access to services holds promise for reducing low birthweight (LBW) among at-risk women and adolescents.

In the study, pregnant women and adolescents eligible for Healthy Families New York (HFNY) were recruited in three communities. Eligibility was based on socioeconomic factors such as poverty, teen pregnancy, and risk of child maltreatment. Two-thirds of the participants were either black or Hispanic, 90% were unmarried, and all had given birth to babies weighing less than 2500 grams (5.5 pounds), defined as LBW by the World Health Organization (WHO).

LBW babies are at increased risk for serious health problems as newborns, lasting disabilities, and even death. According to the March of Dimes, approximately one in every 12 babies born in the United States has LBW. Advances in newborn medical care have greatly reduced the number of deaths associated with low birthweight; but a small percentage of low birthweight babies develop mental retardation, learning problems, [cerebral palsy](#), and vision and [hearing loss](#).

Home visitation programs can be simply defined as social service

programs with visits to the home as the core service. Home visitation covers a broad range of services that include programs targeting low birthweight infants.

LA Best Babies Network is assisting [First 5 LA](#) in launching a universal home visitation pilot program, known as [Welcome, Baby!](#), available to all babies born at California Hospital Medical Center, that will roll out in July 2009. A universal home visitation program is a voluntary program offered to all families in the community, regardless of socioeconomic status.

**Learn more:**

[Home Visits Reduce Risk of Low Birth Weight Babies](#)

Lee E, Mitchell-Herzfeld SD, Lowenfels AA, et al. 2009.

["Reducing low birth weight through home visitation: A randomized controlled trial" American Journal of Preventive Medicine 36\(2\):154-160.](#)

[Read more information on low birthweight from the March of Dimes](#)

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