

Infant Mortality in Oklahoma

What is infant mortality? Infant mortality is the death of a baby that is less than one year old.

Why is infant mortality important? One of the factors in considering a nation's health status compared to other countries is its infant mortality rate (IMR), which is the number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births. There are human and economic costs associated with infant mortality that affect us all.

How does Oklahoma compare? Oklahoma has consistently remained above the national infant mortality rate for over two decades. In Oklahoma, we continue to see disparities between African American and American Indian infant mortality rates compared to white rates.

What is being done to address infant mortality? A statewide initiative, *Preparing for a Lifetime, It's Everyone's Responsibility*, was launched in 2009 to address factors that contribute to infant mortality in Oklahoma.

Key messages include:

- ▣ Being healthy before and between pregnancies greatly improves the chances of having a healthy baby.
- ▣ Taking 400 mcg of folic acid daily can reduce the chances of having a baby with birth defects.
- ▣ Quitting smoking and avoiding exposure to secondhand smoke improves birth outcomes.
- ▣ Having a full-term pregnancy (about 40 weeks) and breastfeeding offer a baby the best start in life.
- ▣ Getting tested and treated, if needed, for sexually transmitted diseases promotes a healthy pregnancy and birth.
- ▣ Recognizing the signs and getting help for postpartum depression can improve health for both mother and baby.
- ▣ Placing baby on his or her back to sleep and providing a safe sleep environment decreases the chances of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- ▣ Knowing how to prevent leading causes of injury, such as correctly installing infant car seats, will help keep baby safe and secure.
- ▣ Learning what to do if a baby will not stop crying may help prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome (abusive head trauma).

Examples of steps you can take to help ensure the health and safety of Oklahoma's babies:

- ▣ Support a woman's healthy choices
- ▣ Become a certified healthy business
- ▣ Refer pregnant women to the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline at 1-800-QUIT NOW (784-8669)
- ▣ Know that a full-term pregnancy lasts about 40 weeks
- ▣ Participate in the March of Dimes Healthy Baby, Healthy Business Program
- ▣ Become a breastfeeding friendly worksite
- ▣ Promote the Oklahoma Breastfeeding Hotline at 1-877-271-MILK (6455)
- ▣ Know the signs and get help for postpartum depression
- ▣ Keep your cool and never shake a baby
- ▣ Learn infant CPR
- ▣ Never leave a baby unattended in water
- ▣ Place a baby on his or her back to sleep and inform all caregivers about infant safe sleep practices
- ▣ Visit the *Preparing for a Lifetime, It's Everyone's Responsibility* web pages at <http://iio.health.ok.gov>

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF OKLAHOMA'S BABIES