



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama's infant mortality rate reaches another all-time low in 2003

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health announces that the infant mortality rate of 8.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2003 was the lowest ever recorded, as were the 519 infant deaths. Alabama's infant mortality rate in 2002 was 9.1 and there were 538 infant deaths, according to the department's Center for Health Statistics.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "This substantial decrease can be attributed to a number of factors. Through combined efforts, significant progress has been made in providing adequate prenatal care, reducing the teen birth rate and lowering the percentage of mothers who smoke."

The percent of births to teens was at its lowest level ever, 13.9 percent, which is important because the infant mortality rate among teens is 50 percent higher than among adult mothers.

While the infant mortality rate for black infants (14.1 per 1,000 live births) remained higher than the rate for white infants (6.5), this was slightly below the national rate for blacks. The white rate of 6.5 continues to be above the national average.

Alabama's infant mortality rate was higher for infants of teen mothers (12.2) than for adult mothers (8.2), for mothers who smoked (12.0) than for mothers who did not smoke (8.3), and for mothers with less than adequate prenatal care (13.8) than for mothers receiving adequate prenatal care (7.0).

Programs that have had a positive effect on this downward trend in Alabama's infant mortality include the following:

- Family planning services to help low-income women plan their pregnancies
- The SOBRA Medicaid Program to provide maternity care for pregnant women and children who meet age and income requirements
- The ALL Kids Children's Health Insurance Program
- Tobacco use prevention programs
- The WIC program which provides nutrition education and nutritious food to low-income mothers and children
- The Back to Sleep Campaign to encourage mothers to put their infants to sleep on their backs to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

- Programs to encourage women of childbearing age to take folic acid to prevent birth defects
- Child death review
- Fetal and infant mortality review

The number of teen births declined from 8,589 in 2002 to 8,248 in 2003, the lowest number of births to teenagers in Alabama ever recorded.

"This decrease is evidence that efforts designed to reduce our state's infant mortality rate are succeeding," Dr. Williamson said. "We must continue to intensify our efforts to address the many issues that contribute to infant mortality."

Graphs and detailed charts including the total resident infant deaths and infant mortality rates by county are available at the Alabama Department of Public Health Web site at <http://www.adph.org>.

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