

Have A Healthy Baby: Saving Babies and Dollars

Issue: Over 9.2%¹ percent of all babies born in Marion County are born too soon (premature) and too small (low birth weight).

Low birth weight babies (those weighing less than 5.5 pounds) is a major contributor to death among infants under one year of age, and preterm birth is a major cause of low birth weight.

Low birth weight babies are at greater risk for death, vision and hearing impairments, hyperactivity, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, school failure and developmental delays. In addition, they are 50 percent more likely to need special education classes.

Risk factors for a mother delivering a low birth weight baby include: too little weight gained during pregnancy, poor nutrition, race (higher for African Americans and Latinos) maternal smoking----Indiana has the 4th highest incidence of smoking by pregnant moms in the nation----and drug and alcohol use.

Extension response: The Have A Healthy Baby (HHB) program, through education, addresses risk factors that can be changed by educating the mom-to-be, such as gaining the proper amount of weight, eating properly, avoiding smoking and second hand smoke. All of this ultimately helps reduce health care costs by changing behaviors.

Trained paraprofessionals who work with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and a Program Educator (hired on with grant dollar to go into Marion County schools) utilize a hands-on , interactive nutrition and life-style curriculum, "Have a Healthy Baby" to educate at risk pregnant women and teens. Lesson topics include: good nutrition, proper weight gain, food safety, the importance of early ad regular prenatal care, the dangers of smoking, drugs, and alcohol, and the importance of being physically active.

The lessons were developed and pilot tested to address the special needs of this unique audience. The lessons are fun free and are taught in schools, homes, clinics or WIC offices

Impact: 41 pregnant teens were taught at 8 different schools by a trained Program Educator who was funded by grant dollars. An additional 242 pregnant teens and women were taught by EFNEP staff.

Of these pregnant women, birth information was available for 131 babies. The others either did not deliver in the reporting period or were unable to be reached for birth information.

Results include:

- ✓ 47 %of program participants initiated breast feeding.
- ✓ 13% of smokers decreased tobacco use or exposure to second hand smoke.
- ✓ 48% achieved appropriate weight gain during pregnancy.
- ✓ 7.6% of babies born were low birth weight.

,Indiana State Department of Health; 2006.

Partners: WIC, Marion County Health Department, March of Dimes, Indiana Prenatal Network, Maternity Care Center, Lawrence Township Schools, Indianapolis Metropolitan High School, Beech Grove School Corporation, Heron High School, Southport High School, Indianapolis Public Schools, George Washington High School.

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