



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Infant mortality rate in Alabama ties second lowest rate ever in 2010

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 2010 ties the second lowest ever recorded and 2008 - 2010 is the lowest three-year infant mortality rate ever—at 8.8. A total of 522 infants born in Alabama died before reaching 1 year of age in 2010.

Teen births and smoking during pregnancy are risk factors that contribute to infant mortality, and both are trending in a positive direction. The percentage of births to teens (12.4) and the percentage of teenage mothers who smoked (11.6) are the lowest ever recorded in Alabama.

Over a 10-year period the rate of births to all teens has decreased by 25 percent from 9,916 in 2000 to 7,446 in 2010. Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "We are encouraged that we are seeing fewer teenagers having children; there has been a 35 percent decrease in births to teens under 18 since 2000. There also has been progress in providing adequate prenatal care for teens, which correlates to improved pregnancy outcomes."

Tobacco use is a concern as the infant mortality rate among smoking mothers is 62 percent higher than in nonsmoking mothers. "We are pleased that we continue to see decreases in smoking rates among teen mothers, although teen mothers smoke at slightly higher rates than other adult mothers," Dr. Williamson added. "Tobacco is considered a gateway drug to other substance abuse, so this improvement indicates young mothers are making better choices for themselves and their unborn children."

Gov. Robert Bentley said, "We are pleased that we are seeing gradual improvements in infant mortality, and we recognize the efforts of the medical and public health communities to reduce the number of families who experience the sadness of infant deaths. We need to place additional emphasis on responding to maternal and child health needs to further lessen infant deaths."

For reasons not fully understood, disparities remain in pregnancy outcomes among black and white mothers in Alabama and nationally.

- The 2010 infant mortality rate for black infants (13.7 per 1,000 live births) was very close to the 2007 national rate for blacks at 13.2.

- The 2010 white infant mortality rate of 6.6 continues to be above the national rate of 5.6 in 2007.

The infant mortality rate for mothers over 35 increased in 2010. Older mothers have higher rates of multiple births, and the infant mortality rate for multiple births in Alabama was 34.1 as compared with a rate for single births of 7.7. Multiple births represented 3.7 percent of all live births in 2010, the highest percentage in at least a decade.

Positive indicators in 2010 are that the percent of births at less than 37 weeks of pregnancy declined to 16.0 in 2010, and the percent of low weight births (less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces) also showed a slight decline. Low birth weight babies are about 20 times more likely to die than infants of normal weight.

The counties with the lowest three-year infant mortality rates, 2008-2010, were Choctaw, 2.3; DeKalb and Geneva, 4.4; Shelby, 5.0; Henry, 5.5; and Blount and Crenshaw, 5.7. In 2010 no infant deaths occurred in residents of Cleburne, Geneva, Lamar, Macon or Wilcox counties.

Graphs and detailed charts are available at the Alabama Department of Public Health website at www.adph.org/healthstats.