



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Infant mortality rate in Alabama declines, but increases among blacks

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health Center for Health Statistics announces that the state's infant mortality rate of 8.3 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2015 showed a decrease, with a total of 494 infants born in Alabama dying before reaching 1 year of age. The most current available U.S. provisional infant mortality rate is 5.8 for 2014.

Disparities in infant mortality between black and white infants continued. The 2015 infant mortality rate for black infants was the highest it has been in the past 10 years--15.3 per 1,000, while the white infant mortality rate was its lowest in more than a decade, 5.2. A disparity between races exists for both Alabama and the U.S., with the black rate for the U.S. in 2014 at 11.1 and the white rate of 4.9.

State Health Officer Dr. Tom Miller said, "The racial disparity between black and white infant birth outcomes continues to be of great concern. The black rate is almost three times the white rate in the state. There is much work to be done to address this ongoing challenge. We need to explore and transform social determinants of infant mortality in our population by addressing modifiable risk factors that contribute to unfavorable birth outcomes."

The top three causes of infant mortality in Alabama that accounted for 40 to 45 percent of infant deaths are congenital anomalies, prematurity and sleep-related causes. Factors contributing to infant mortality in Alabama include:

- Maternal chronic health conditions existing prior to pregnancy
- Short intervals between pregnancies
- Premature births
- Unhealthy lifestyle choices and behaviors

Strategies to improve birth outcomes include the following:

- Expanding fetal and infant mortality review activities at the local level
- Improving education about infants' safe sleeping habits
- Emphasizing the need for appropriate spacing between pregnancies to at least an 18-month interval between pregnancies

- Improving access to appropriate health care, including long-acting reversible contraceptives and medications to prevent premature birth

Low birth weight infants in Alabama (those weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces) accounted for 68.8 percent of the 2015 infant deaths; these infants are 20 times more likely to die than are normal weight infants. The percent of low weight births rose to 10.4 in 2015.

The percent of births at less than 37 weeks of pregnancy remained at 11.7 in 2015; this rate has been steadily declining since 2005. Births to mothers with an interval between births of less than two years rose to 23.9 percent.

Positive trends include the percent of births to teens (8.0) and the percent of teen mothers who admitted smoking during pregnancy (9.2), the lowest rates ever recorded. Mothers who received adequate prenatal care increased slightly from 75.0 to 75.3 percent of all live births in 2015.

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