

Low Birthweight Babies (LBW)

Introduction:

In Heath Wellness we were asked to sign up and pick a specific topic to research. I decided to choose low birthweight babies to find out more information on this topic because I find it interesting. I also know people who were born premature and were so small they were close to death. My point of researching is to get some of my questions answered. I'd like to research the causes of low birth weights and how to prevent this from happening while a woman is pregnant. Since so many women aren't aware of the risks I'd like to research the most important factors to keep in mind.

Overall, wellness class is about staying healthy and I wanted to research how women can stay healthy and hopefully avoid having a baby with a dangerous low birthweight.

Section 1: Background and Problem Statement

Birthweight is the first weight that a newborn obtains after birth. Having a low birthweight is a baby that weighs less than 2500 grams (About 5 pounds, 8 ounces) with a chance of developing lack of oxygen during labor. If these babies survive, they can be at risk for neurological abnormalities and dying before age one. A baby's birthweight is a concern because of the increased risk for complications.

- **Web site #1 Name: Evergreen: Hospital Medical Center**
- **Web address:**
<http://www.prb.org/Journalists/Webcasts/2007/LowBirthWeight.aspx>
- **Background Information:**

Some newborns are so small and light that they can fit in the palm of your hand because of their low birthweight. Low birthweight can occur due to multiple births, inherited disease, medical problems and environmental problems. Environmental problems can include exposure to carbon monoxide, and tobacco (smoking cigarettes).

Mothers who suffer from anxiety were also at risk for having a low birthweight baby. The anxiety was showed to affect the baby the most during the first and second trimester.

- **Web site #2 Name: Pub Med: Low Birth Weight Babies**
- **Web address:**
http://www.healthypeople.gov/Document/HTML/volume2/16MICH.htm#_Toc494699665
- **Background Information:**

The goal of this Web site is to improve the health of women and infants. Improving women's health is very important because it will affect the fetus while in the womb. The presence of risk factors (e.g., smoking, drinking, etc.) will determine the health of their baby. In 1997 one of the leading causes of infant death was low birthweight, which is just another reason to find ways to prevent/decrease this problem.

- **Web site #3 Name: Low Birth Weight Problem/Causes**
- **Web address:**
<http://www.prb.org/Journalists/Webcasts/2007/LowBirthWeight.aspx>
- **Background Information:**

Newborns weighing less than 5.5 pounds are said to be premature. These babies may have an increased risk of health issues including heart disease, stunted growth, behavior problems and diabetes. (Paragraph 4) Having a low birth rate is defined as less than 2500 grams.

Section 2: Research

- **Web site #1 Name: University of Iowa, Children's Hospital
Low Birth Weight Babies: The Correct Things to do to Help Your Baby**
- **Web address:**
<http://www.uihealthcare.com/topics/medicaldepartments/pediatrics/lowbirthweight/index.html>
- **Summary of the research:**

The University of Iowa Health Science Relations has researched good health habits that can prevent having a premature baby during labor. Although it's not ensuring a perfect birth, it's what they are trying to aim for. Dr Herman Hein says that premature babies are the most common low birthweight babies, and can result from an infection the mother has, or drug use. Babies born this way need help breathing to stay alive which can be done with a ventilator called an oscillator which allows carbon dioxide to move out of the lungs. (Paragraph 2) Another way to prevent breathing problems is to use medication to help a baby's lungs. (University of Iowa Children's Hospital, paragraph 4).

- **Web site #2 Name: National Institutes of Health: Research on Preterm Labor**
- **Web address:**
<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/womenshealth/research/pregbirth/preterm.cfm?renderforprint=1>
- **Summary of the research:**

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development have reported many methods to try and stop low birthweight from occurring, which seem to be mostly ineffective. Their research is trying to identify causes and predictors of low birth weight. Sometimes (PROM) is a situation where the women's water breaks before the fetus is fully developed. The fetus, along with the womb, produces certain enzymes and proteins that can cause membranes to break apart. (National Institutes of Health, Paragraph 1-4)

Other research has shown that certain infections can be a cause of preterm labor. These infections could be bacterial vaginosis or a sexually transmitted infection called trichomoniasis.

- **Web site #3 Name: American Pregnancy Association**
- **Web address:**
<http://www.americanpregnancy.org/labornbirth/prematurelabor.html>
- **Summary of the research:**

The American Pregnancy Association's research states the only treatment to prevent labor of low birthweight infants is with certain medications. Oral medications may be used to decrease contractions and to take away some of the pain a pregnant woman is feeling. Magnesium Sulfate is one of the medications that you take through an IV. It's given in a big dose and continuously smaller doses for at least a day. Another medication that is used 24 hours before labor and is supposed to help the baby's brain and lungs mature (American Pregnancy

Association, Paragraph 7).

Section 3: Statistics

- **Web site #1 Name: March of Dimes**
- **Web address:**
http://www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/14332_1153.asp
- **Summary of the statistics:**

There are many ways that a baby can be defined as a low birthweight. The two most common reasons are premature birth and fetal growth restriction. Being premature is a baby born early before 37 weeks of pregnancy. The earlier the baby comes out, the less it will weigh. The longer a baby stays in the womb, the healthier it will be. Other babies are born right on time, but still are very small, which is fetal growth restriction. This low birthweight is completely healthy even though the baby is small. (March of Dimes, Paragraph 3).

- **Web site #2 Name: Bliss: For babies born too soon, too small, too sick**
- **Web address:**
<http://www.bliss.org.uk/page.asp?section=764§ionTitle=Low+birthweight+babies+%96+definitions+and+statistics>
- **Summary of the statistics:**

A baby with a low birthweight can be in three different categories. If they are classified as a low birthweight baby, the baby weighs less than 5.5 pounds. A very low birth weight baby weighs around 3 pounds. Lastly, some babies are considered an extremely low birth weight baby weighing less than 2.2 pounds. A baby is considered premature if they are born before 37 weeks. Some babies can be categorized under the following: Moderate premature (35-37 weeks), very premature (29-34 weeks) and extremely premature (29 weeks or earlier). (Bliss.org, Paragraph 1, & graph data).

- **Web site #3: Kids Data: Low Birthweight**
- **Web address: <http://www.kidsdata.org/data/topic/dashboard.aspx?cat=56>**
- **Summary of the statistics:**

This Web site provides facts on low birthweight in 2007 depending on racial differences. In California, African Americans had the highest percentage (12.1%). Asians had a percentage of 7.6 while Caucasians had the lowest percentage rate of 6.4. There is also information on the age of the mother, which is an important factor. About 9.2% of mothers were under age 15.

Section 4: Consumer Information

- **Web site #1 Name: Biomedicine**
- **Web address: <http://www.bio-medicine.org/medicine-news/Smoking-Linked-To-Low-Infant-Birth-Weight--869-1/>**
- **Summary of the information:**

Smoking during pregnancy is a major health problem and can harm your child in several ways. Cigarettes contain more than 2,500 chemicals. Smokers can reduce the weight and have double the risk of having a LBW baby. A baby still has a chance of being born healthy if the mother stops smoking by her second trimester.

Web site #2 Name: Multiple Births

- **Web address: <http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=%2Fwx%2FlyWpBT0%3D&tabid=102&mid=977>**
- **Summary of the information:**

Almost 90% of all the multiple birth babies are born with a VLBW (very low birthweight). Half of all infant deaths are caused by a low birth weight. From 2001-2003, 6.4% of infants were born very light and were at risk for dying. Infants that are born and weigh 2,500 grams or less are commonly seen in teenage

mothers age 18, and older mothers age 44+. From 1984 to 2003, multiple births and low birth weights were significantly increasing.

- **Web site #3 Name: MayoClinic- Premature Birth**
- **Web address: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/premature-birth/DS00137/DSECTION=risk%2Dfactors>**
- **Summary of the information:**

Some pregnant women are at risk of premature and low birthweight babies and aren't even aware. Not only can alcohol and smoking be risk factors, but also the mother's weight. If a mother is underweight or overweight before pregnancy they are at risk. If you have had a previous premature child, you are still at risk with your next pregnancy as well. The state of mind that a pregnant mother is experiencing can also affect the baby's health. If a mother is stressed or depressed with the death of a loved one, they are at risk.

Section 5: Solutions to the Problem (or Issue)

- **Web site #1 Name: Miracle Babies**
- **Web address: <http://www.miraclebabies.org/index2.php?v=v1>**
- **Summary of the information:**

This Web site is non-profit organization with volunteers who have created the Miracle Babies Organization. This organization is trying to become the nation's leading non-profit resource for intensive-care unit (NICU) patients and families in need. Their goal is to be recognized influencers in raising premature birth awareness by providing assistance to the community and professional care for children to keep them alive. (Paragraph 1)

Preterm birth is the #1 cause of newborn mortality in the United States. Preterm births are responsible for 75% of neonatal mortality and 50% of long-term neurologic damage in children. (Paragraph 2)

- **Web site #2 Name: Cochcrane Collaboration**
- **Web address: <http://www.cochrane.org/reviews/en/ab000198.html>**
- **Summary of the information:**

The Cochrane Collaboration is an international non-profit organization that is designed to support and help women and keep them, along with their families, up to date with accurate health information on how to stay strong. This collaboration has created programs to help mothers and offer emotional support and assistance. The programs offered include advice to women and different types of counseling they may be interested in. Different events and programs can help them learn about proper nutrition, stress management and alcohol and drug use. This information is given by trained and professional workers to provide correct facts and advice.

These trained workers are willing to give advice, home visits and clinic visits by making appointments. They believe that pregnant women truly need the support of their family members and close friends in order to prevent stress, which can harm the woman along with her baby.

- **Web site #2 Name: KIDS COUNT: Preventing Low Birth Weight**
- **Web address: <http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/K/KIDSCOUNTIndicatorBriefPreventingLowBirthWeig/PreventingLowBirthweight.pdf>**
- **Summary of the information:**

KIDS COUNT & The Annie E. Casey Foundation are designed to do helpful

research and hope for answers to stop LBW. LBW is not only a medical problem, but a social problem as well. The organization describes five strategies to reduce the rate of low birthweight: Expand access to medical services, focus on smoking prevention, adequate nutrition, address social and environmental risk factors and to support research and causes of low birthweight infants.

They are also looking to develop programs dealing with stress and the factors that come along with it. They want to try and help women smokers from developing depression and be in control of their weight gain/loss. The main key is to keep women, along with others educated on how they can decrease their risk for their children to be premature.

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Back to Fact Sheet Directory	http://www.bettycjung.net/Pch202fs.htm