



THE QUICK FACTS

THE PROBLEM:

- Louisiana has one of the country's highest rates of low birth weight, babies who weigh less than 5.5 pounds at birth.
- In 2001, 10.5 % of all Louisiana babies weighed less than 5.5 – the national rate was only 7.7 %.
- An underweight baby (less than 2500 grams or 5.5 pounds) often means the mother did not receive adequate prenatal care or education.
- Low birth weight babies will more likely face future medical and developmental problems – increasing health care costs for the mother and the state.

THE LINKS:

Link #1 Proper Weight Gain

- Proper weight gain is a simple way to improve the chance of a normal birth weight. Improper diet and lack of nutritional counseling contribute to improper weight gain during pregnancy.
- 33 % of women in Louisiana do not gain enough weight during pregnancy.
- Most women should gain between 25-35 pounds during pregnancy.

Link #2 Smoking and Secondhand Smoke

- Infants born to mothers who smoke weigh less than other infants.
- 33.4% of all maternal smokers in the U.S. fall into the age groups of either 15-19 or 20-24, and 18.2% of them are between ages 18-19.
- More than 50% of women who try to quit smoking during pregnancy are successful, but approximately 70% return to smoking afterward.
- Secondhand smoke exposure increases the chance that infants will die of SIDS; have asthma; and/or develop ear infections, pneumonia and/or behavioral problems.
- Stress related to new motherhood and the “baby blues,” or worries about losing pregnancy weight cause women to return to smoking.

Link #3 Oral Health

- Expectant mothers who have untreated periodontal disease are seven times more likely to deliver low birth weight infants than mothers with healthy mouths.
- An expectant mother with periodontal disease who receives treatment significantly reduces her risk of having an underweight baby.

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