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Premature birth rates in U.S. rise

by Trisha Koriath, Staff Writer

For the first time in eight years, the preterm birth rate in the U.S. has worsened, increasing from 9.57% of births to 9.63%. If the rate had not increased during this period (2014-'15), approximately 2,000 fewer babies would have been born preterm, according to March of Dimes.

The March of Dimes goal is to lower the preterm birth rate to 8.1% by 2020 and 5.5% by 2030. The Academy is a partner in the campaign.



The U.S. received a "C" grade on the 2016 March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card. The campaign emphasizes that every baby should have a fair chance of being born healthy. However, the report card reveals that babies in this country have different chances of surviving and thriving based on the circumstances of their birth.

Although rates improved in four states, they worsened in seven states. Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana received an F due to higher rates. Nationally, preterm birth rates were higher in non-white ethnicities. Hispanic populations were 1.1% higher than white populations, while black populations were 1.5% higher.

Eight interventions are targeted for implementation in the most challenged communities to improve the preterm birth rates:

- Reduce non-medically indicated (elective) deliveries.
- Increase use of progesterone for women with a history of preterm birth.
- Reduce tobacco use among pregnant women.
- Encourage women to space pregnancies at least 18 months apart.
- Expand group prenatal care.
- Increase use of low-dose aspirin to prevent preeclampsia.
- Advance interventions for women diagnosed with a short cervix.
- Reduce multiple births conceived through assisted reproductive technology.

Expanding these interventions nationwide would reduce the \$26 billion spent annually in avoidable medical and societal costs for preterm birth, according to March of Dimes.

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Prematurity Day (Nov. 17), and support programs and research investigating causes of preterm birth at www.marchofdimes.org.