

Help moms have healthy babies, and give Texans the strongest possible start.



Good health in childhood begins before birth, with the health of mothers-to-be. It is forged early on with the care and attention we give our babies.

Newborn Texans deserve a level playing field. Yet some babies enter the world with better chances than others. The infants whose mothers receive consistent prenatal care, who time their pregnancies right for healthy outcomes, who receive doctors' advice even before conception—these are the children less likely to be born prematurely or at a dangerously low birth weight. Likewise, infants who have medical care, including the right supports for any concerns that arise, face better odds than the children who have to go without seeing a doctor. To make sure more young Texans start life out right, it's important to pay attention to health care supports for women, healthy newborns, preemies, and infants with special needs.

What to Know

- Prenatal care—routine maternal health care that monitors a pregnancy's progress and the health of the mother and fetus—is **one of the best ways to ensure children start life in good health**. Adequate, early prenatal care has a proven track record of leading to healthier births¹ and reducing the risk of



low birth weight, prematurity, and neonatal and infant mortality.²

- As vital as prenatal care is, **40% of Texas babies' mothers receive no prenatal care or none before the second trimester**.³ Texas ranks 40th in the U.S. for prenatal care.⁴
- Two reasons so many women miss out on this care are: 1) many Texans lack health care;⁵ and 2) many pregnancies—49% in Texas—come as a surprise.⁶ **Women with pregnancies they didn't plan are less likely to seek out prenatal care,⁷ which puts their babies at higher risk** for low birth weight, prematurity, and other challenges in infancy.⁸
- When women have a chance to get good health care, including screenings for breast and cervical cancer and birth control to prevent mistimed pregnancies, whole families benefit. In 2011, the Texas legislature cut state investments in family planning by two-thirds and made it more difficult for many providers to receive any funding at all.^{9,10} Consequently, an estimated 284,000 Texas women were set to lose access to birth control and cancer screenings over the biennium, and 20,500 more births⁷ would have to be covered by Medicaid. The general revenue **cost to the state, following the family planning cuts, is 59% higher** over two years than what it would have cost to hold the line on women's health care services.¹¹
- **Babies, too, see proven benefits when they receive preventive health care** and early and periodic screenings.^{12,13} Unfortunately, Texas has one of the nation's highest rates of uninsured children, and some who have coverage still miss getting routinely

screened. Children born prematurely or with special health care needs may need extra resources, beyond what their family insurance policy covers, to reach their full potential later in life.

How to Make it Happen

- **Make sure babies, including children born prematurely and with special needs, have the health care they need:** Many Texas leaders recognize the importance of giving children a healthy start. Texas has made progress in recent years and needs to continue its track record of working to get to the finish line, where every baby born can see a doctor for preventive care in his or her first years of life and every child with a special need receives the resources vital to his or her later success.
- **Help see that more babies are born healthy by ensuring women have public and private access to health services.** Women need adequate prenatal care during pregnancy and good health care before conception, between pregnancies, and to prevent unintended or mistimed pregnancies that, in turn, lead to too many premature and low birth-weight beginnings for Texas children.

For more on this topic, visit <http://txchildren.org/Report/Health>

Thinking About Costs

In its first two years, the Women's Health Program (WHP) saved Texas more than \$37.6 million in general revenue: a savings of more than \$10 for every \$1 the state invested.

The average annual Medicaid cost when a woman has a mistimed pregnancy due to lost access to family planning services is \$11,268. The annual costs associated with a preterm birth, which might be prevented with better access to prenatal care, is \$51,600. Last legislative session's budget cuts of roughly \$61 million could cost Texas four times more than that, Legislative Budget Board analysts say. By contrast, if the state had decided to expand Women's Health Services it would have led to savings of \$142.5 million in 2012-2013.

Sources



"Thinking about Costs"

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