



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Vermont Tops Rankings in March of Dimes 2014 Premature Birth Report Card



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BURLINGTON – Vermont has the lowest preterm birth rate in the nation, according to the March of Dimes 2014 Premature Birth Report Card. Vermont was one of only five states to receive a score of “A,” and has received the highest score on the report card for the past seven years in a row.

“Since 2008, when the March of Dimes first issued our premature birth report cards, Vermont has always been a leader in preventing premature birth,” said Edward R. McCabe, MD, chief medical officer at the March of Dimes. “Vermont officials and experts have always shown the political will by working together implementing robust quality improvement programs to make sure all babies get a healthy start in life.”

The March of Dimes Report Card compares each state’s preterm birth rate to the March of Dimes goal of lowering the rate to 9.6 percent of all live births by 2020. Vermont’s rate is 8.1 percent. California (8.8 percent), New Hampshire (9.0 percent), Maine (9.3 percent), and Oregon (9.3 percent) were the only other states to earn an “A.” The national rate is 11.4 percent.

“This report is a point of pride for us, and shows our focus on early prenatal care continues to be a model for the rest of the nation,” said Health Commissioner Tracy Dolan. “We offer a multidisciplinary range of health services to pregnant women (and their families), including physical exams, dental and health screening, nutrition, social services, education and referral services.”

Vermont has also implemented Nurse-Family Partnership in 2011, which provides nurse home visits for first-time, lower-income mothers throughout their pregnancy and up through the baby’s second birthday. The program offers nurse home visiting as an evidence-based strategy that improves pregnancy outcomes, and reduces preterm deliveries. Vermont has also established a Home Visiting Alliance that has created common core elements and guidelines for home visiting programs statewide.

Vermont showed improvement over the last year in three areas that contribute to premature birth measured in the report, including uninsured women with no source of health insurance coverage (7.6 percent to 7.3 percent), late preterm births (6.2 percent to 5.8 percent), and women who smoke cigarettes (20.3 percent to 20.2 percent).

Preterm births are a leading cause of birth complications, and the leading cause of neonatal death. Babies who survive an early birth often face the risk of lifetime health challenges and developmental disabilities. Achieving a healthy weight, moderate exercise, a healthy diet, reducing stress, avoiding tobacco, tobacco smoke, alcohol, illegal drugs and some medications all are positive steps women can take to reduce risks.

The Report Card information for every state is available online at: www.marchofdimes.com/reportcard.

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