

## HEALTHY PEOPLE 2010 GOAL:

Reduce the number of infant deaths to a rate of 4.5 per 1,000 live births.

## Definition of Indicator

Number and rate of infant mortality per 1,000 live births. Infant mortality refers to deaths of infants under one year of age.

## Findings

Preliminary 2007 data shows that 187 infants died before their first birthday, an overall rate of 4.2 deaths per 1,000 live births in Orange County. Blacks or African Americans had the highest rate of infant mortality at 13.2 per 1,000 live births. The infant mortality rate for Non-Hispanic White was the second highest at 4.4 per 1,000 births. Hispanic or Latino and Asians had infant mortality rates of 3.9 and 2.9 per 1,000 live births, respectively.

**Number and Rate of Infant Mortality per 1,000 Live Births, 1999 to 2007**

	1999*	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 <sup>1</sup>	2006 <sup>2</sup>	2007 <sup>3</sup>
Number	204	231	206	216	200	179	211	224	187
Rate per 1,000 Live Births	4.4	4.9	4.5	4.8	4.4	4.0	4.8	5.1	4.2

<sup>1-3</sup> 2005-2007 data are preliminary

Source: Health Care Agency, Family Health Division

## STATEWIDE:

In 2005, there were a total of 2,913 infant deaths in California for a rate of 5.3 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.<sup>4</sup>

## Trends

The trend analysis is valid for the past nine years only (1999-2007) due to significant changes in the coding of causes of death by the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10) that were implemented beginning with 1999 mortality data. There has been an 8.3% decrease in the number of infant mortalities from 204 in 1999 to 187 in 2007. This is down from high of 224 (5.1 per 1,000 live births) in 2006.

## Why is this Important?

The rate of infant mortality is a widely used indicator of development and the overall health of a society. Improvements in the infant mortality rate reflect medical technology, hygiene and sanitation systems, and the availability and use of both preventive and clinical health services.<sup>1</sup>

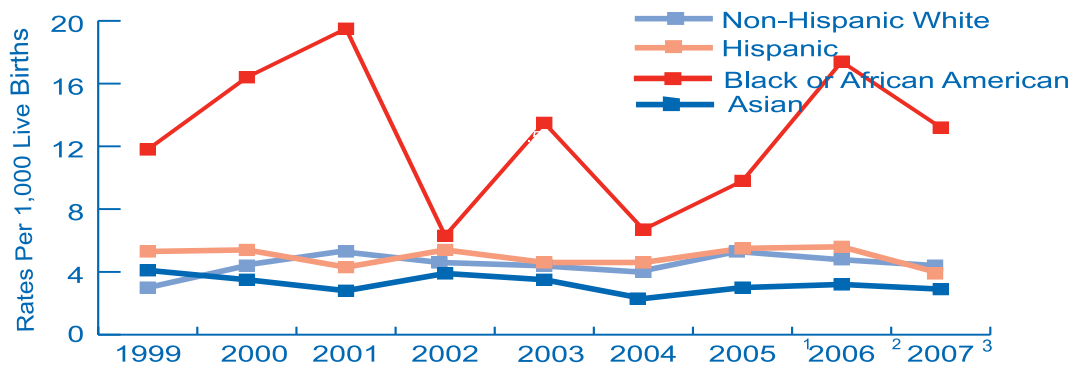
Maternal factors that influence infant mortality include age, education level, use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, nutrition, unintended pregnancy, chronic illness during pregnancy, and/or injury during pregnancy (including domestic violence).<sup>2</sup> Because the first year of life is more precarious than later years of childhood, negative social conditions (such as poverty and unhealthy environments) have a larger impact on this vulnerable group.<sup>3</sup>

## RELATED INDICATORS:

- Early Prenatal Care
- Substance-Exposed Infants
- Low Birth Weight
- Immunization of Children
- Supplemental Nutrition Programs: WIC & CSFP

# INFANT MORTALITY

**Rate per 1,000 Live Births Suffering Infant Mortality by Race and Ethnicity, 1998 to 2007**



\* Significant changes in coding causes of death were implemented beginning with 1999 mortality data. It is important to keep in mind that these changes make direct comparisons with earlier data of uncertain validity.

<sup>1-3</sup> 2005-2007 data are preliminary.

Source: County of Orange Health Care Agency, Family Health Division.

## What's Happening in Orange County?

- The Orange County infant mortality rate decreased to 4.2 per 1,000 live births in 2007 and met the Healthy People 2010 goal of 4.5.
- Short gestation and low birth weight, congenital anomalies, and maternal causes contributed to about 50% of deaths among Orange County infants in 2007.

### What's Working:

- The Orange County Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health (MCAH) Programs continue to work on promoting preconception and interconception health within county and clinic services and community health care providers.
- Orange County maintains a Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) coordinator to raise awareness and has established educational programs focused on SIDS risk reduction.

### Safe Arms for Newborns

Although very few infants are abandoned at birth by their mothers, each incident is both high profile and tragic. All too often, these otherwise healthy infants become injured or die before they are discovered, and the mothers face prosecution through the legal system. On January 1, 2001, the Safe Arms for Newborns law (SB1368) became effective, making it legal for a parent to leave an infant up to 72 hours old at a hospital emergency room or other location designated by the County. In Orange County, the Board of Supervisors has designated the Orangewood Children's Home and all manned Orange County fire stations as additional sites to receive abandoned infants. The Social Services Agency and the Health Care Agency have worked together to inform these sites about the new law and advise on procedures to follow if an infant is abandoned at their facility. The two agencies, with the assistance of the Children and Families Commission of Orange County, also have prepared a brochure to inform prospective mothers of this legal and safe method of abandoning an infant ([www.ochealthinfo.com/cscc/](http://www.ochealthinfo.com/cscc/)). The infants are placed in a licensed foster home until an adoptive family can be found. Parents who leave their infant have 14 days to change their minds.

✓ See page 141 in Supplemental Tables for additional data

### NATIONWIDE:

2008 provisional data indicate the infant mortality rate was 6.3 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.<sup>5</sup>

### DATA SOURCES:

Orange County Health Care Agency, Family Health Division  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
California Department of Health Services

### NOTES:

- <sup>1,2</sup>Children's Defense Fund, The State of America's Children Yearbook, 2001
- <sup>3</sup>Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Book, 1999
- <sup>4</sup>California, Department of Public Health Services, Infant Death Statistical Data, 2005
- <sup>5</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Vital Statistics Reports, Provisional Data for 2008