

# I. Desired Outcome: Children Are Healthy

Most children in San Mateo County are healthy, as measured by several indicators of children’s health and by factors such as insurance coverage, which can influence children’s health (See Table 1). Children in the county tend to have better health outcomes than the average child in California, although not necessarily as good as the objectives established by the national Healthy People 2010 initiative.<sup>iv</sup>

However, about one-third of 2- to 11-year-olds never have seen a dentist, one-quarter of children are overweight or at risk of obesity, and African American and Latino/Hispanic children tend to fare worse than Caucasian/white and Asian children on many measures.

*Key health issues are summarized below, and more data are available at [www.kidsdata.org](http://www.kidsdata.org).*

## Prenatal Care and Birth Outcomes

Whether children have been born full term and of normal birthweight (5.5 pounds or more) can have profound long-term impacts on their well-being. On average, children born preterm (<37 weeks gestation) lag behind their peers in IQ, language development and school achievement.<sup>6</sup> They also have a higher incidence of learning disabilities and school failure.<sup>7</sup> About half the children born at low birthweight eventually require special education services.<sup>8</sup> Women who receive prenatal care early in their pregnancies are more likely to have healthy births, although prenatal care by itself—at least as it is typically delivered—is not sufficient to prevent poor birth outcomes.<sup>9,10,11</sup> Still, many researchers recommend prenatal care, particularly with enhanced and comprehensive content, as an important strategy that can address health risks for mothers, provide health education, and link mothers and newborns to other preventive health and supportive services.<sup>12,13</sup>

The news is mixed about health care for pregnant women and birth outcomes in San Mateo County. More mothers are receiving prenatal care in the first trimester than ever before (89.8% in 2004),<sup>14</sup> and infant mortality rates have fallen in recent years (to 3.8 per 1,000 in 2002-2004).<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, after falling steadily from 1995 to 2001, the proportion of babies born with low birthweight has increased by 16% in recent years, from 5.7% in 2001 to 6.6% in 2004 (see Figure 1).<sup>16</sup> The county’s infant mortality rate is better than the Healthy People 2010 objective, but the percentages of women receiving early

**Table 1. Children Are Healthy: Key Indicators in San Mateo County**

### Prenatal Care and Birth Outcomes

- Prenatal care in first trimester
- Low birthweight
- Infant mortality

### Access to Health Care Services

- Health insurance coverage
- Health and dental care
- Immunization rates

### Nutrition, Weight and Physical Fitness

- Breastfeeding
- Obesity
- Physical fitness

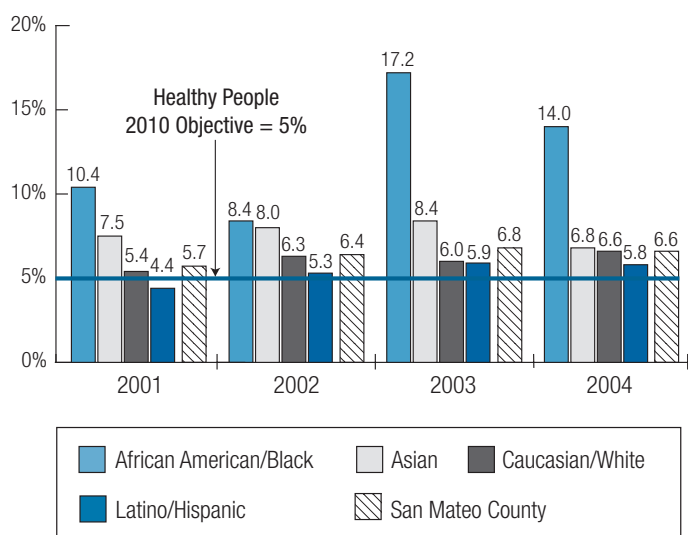
### Teen Birth Rate

iv. Published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Healthy People 2010* is a comprehensive set of disease prevention and health promotion objectives for the nation. The objectives were created by scientists and primarily seek to increase life expectancy, improve quality of life and eliminate health disparities ([www.healthypeople.gov](http://www.healthypeople.gov)). In 2004, the San Mateo County Health Department adopted the Healthy People 2010 framework and published a report on the health status of county residents, using the same indicators as were used in the national report ([http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/smc/department/health/home/0,,1954\\_106958709\\_107292062,00.html](http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/smc/department/health/home/0,,1954_106958709_107292062,00.html)). Relevant Healthy People 2010 objectives are included in the summary table at the end of this report.

prenatal care and of babies born with low birthweight are worse than national benchmarks.

As in the rest of California, there remain deep ethnic and racial disparities, with Caucasian/white and Asian children generally showing better outcomes than most other racial/ethnic groups. Figure 1 illustrates the racial/ethnic disparities in low birthweight births. In San Mateo County, the percentage of babies born with low birthweight to African American mothers is greater than the percentage for most other racial/ethnic groups, while the percentage of low birthweight Latino/Hispanic babies is lowest.<sup>17</sup> Table 2 shows that the percentages of African American and Latina/Hispanic women who receive early prenatal care have increased since 2001. However, Pacific Islanders continue to be the least likely to receive early prenatal care.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 1. Percentage of San Mateo County Infants Born with Low Birthweight, by Race/Ethnicity**



Source: California Department of Health Services, Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics Query System, <http://www.applications.dhs.ca.gov/vsq/default.asp>. Retrieved 05/21/07.

Note: In 2004, 667 infants were born with low birthweight in San Mateo County. Of those, 32 were African American, 170 Asian, 245 Caucasian/white and 193 Latino/Hispanic.

**Table 2. Percentage of San Mateo County Women Receiving Prenatal Care in the First Trimester, by Race/Ethnicity**

Race/Ethnicity	2001	2002	2003	2004
African American/Black	76.2%	82.8%	83.3%	87.8%
Asian	87.1	88.7	90.7	91.4
Caucasian/White	90.9	91.1	91.7	94.0
Latina/Hispanic	80.8	82.0	84.7	85.6
Multiracial	79.7	84.6	84.8	87.7
Pacific Islander	66.4	60.6	72.6	68.4
<b>San Mateo County</b>	<b>85.7</b>	<b>86.7</b>	<b>88.4</b>	<b>89.8</b>

Source: California Department of Health Services, Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics Query System, <http://www.applications.dhs.ca.gov/vsq/default.asp>. Retrieved 05/21/07.

Note: In 2004, 9,064 women received prenatal care in the first trimester. Of those, 3,466 were Caucasian/white; 2,836 Latina/Hispanic; 2,270 Asian; 201 African American; 142 multiracial; and 134 Pacific Islander.

### Access to Health Care Services, Including Preventive Health Care and Immunizations

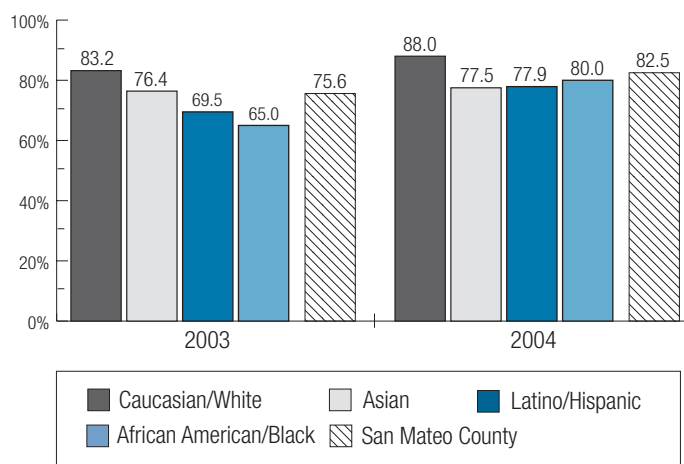
Nationally, children without health insurance are less likely to have a regular pediatrician and to use medical and dental care. They also are more likely to be in poor health and under-immunized.<sup>19</sup> But when publicly funded sources of health insurance are expanded, children receive better care, and their health, school performance and school attendance improves.<sup>20,21</sup>

The San Mateo County Children's Health Initiative (CHI) was launched in 2003 to help secure health insurance coverage for all children, including those who are undocumented.<sup>22</sup> Prior to CHI, 17,000 children were estimated to be uninsured.<sup>23</sup> From 2002-2004 alone, CHI contributed to a 66% increase in the number of children enrolled in Medi-Cal, Healthy Families and Healthy Kids (the three public health insurance programs for which CHI facilitates

enrollment)<sup>24</sup> and, as of fall 2006, the number of children without health insurance had been reduced to approximately 3,000.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, for dental insurance, 83.3% of children ages 2-17 were covered in 2005, slightly less than the 84.7% in 2001.<sup>26</sup>

With greater health insurance coverage, preventive health care should be more accessible for children. The percentage of kindergarteners who had been fully immunized by age 2 climbed from 75.6% in 2003 to 82.5% in 2004.<sup>27</sup> In addition, it appears that the racial/ethnic disparities in immunization rates may be lessening. The 18 percentage-point gap between Caucasian/whites and African Americans in 2003 had closed to an 8 percentage-point difference in 2004. The gap between Caucasians/whites and Latinos/Hispanics also narrowed (see Figure 2).<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 2. Percentage of Children in San Mateo County Fully Immunized by Age 2, by Race/Ethnicity**



Source: California Kindergarten Retrospective Survey, California Department of Health Services, Immunization Branch; San Mateo County Health Department, Immunization Program, as cited on [www.kidsdata.org](http://www.kidsdata.org).

Note: These data come from a survey of the immunization records of kindergarten students; 946 student records were surveyed in 2004, and 1,751 were surveyed in 2003. In 2004, 6,759 kindergarteners were enrolled in public schools in the county. Of those, 240 were African American; 697 Asian; 2,295 Caucasian/white; and 2,263 Latino/Hispanic.

While immunization rates have improved, one-third of all children ages 2-11 (approximately 30,600 children) had never been to a dentist in 2005, compared to 24.1% statewide.<sup>29</sup>

### Nutrition, Weight and Physical Fitness

For infants, the most complete form of nutrition is breast milk. Breastfeeding is associated with reduced postneonatal infant mortality rates, decreased rates of obesity in later life, and improved cognitive, language and motor development.<sup>30,31,32</sup> The longer infants are exclusively breastfed, the better. For example, babies who are breastfed for six rather than four months have fewer respiratory illnesses and ear infections.<sup>33</sup>

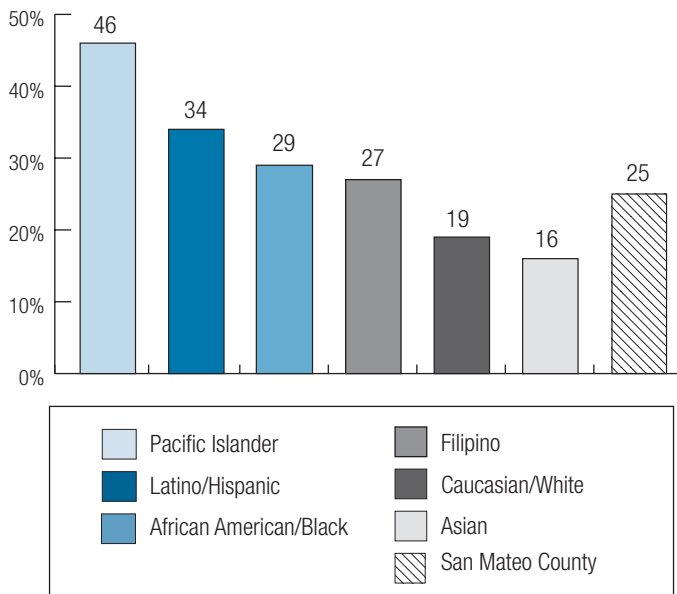
In San Mateo County, 93% of women initiated breastfeeding in 2004, higher than the average percentage in California (83.9%) and the U.S. Healthy People 2010 objective (75%).<sup>34</sup> While in the hospital after giving birth, 72.4% of women in the county exclusively breastfed their infants, a decline in recent years but still much higher than the California average of 40.5%.<sup>35</sup> In 2004, Caucasian/white women in the county were most likely to exclusively breastfeed in the hospital (79.2%), in comparison to Asian, Latina/Hispanic and multiracial women (all about 70%), Pacific Islanders (52.3%) and African American women (47.1%).<sup>36</sup>

Nationally, childhood obesity has increased over the past 30 years.<sup>37</sup> Rates of childhood obesity are higher among racial/ethnic minority and low-income children who may live in communities with less access to healthful food and/or safe places for children to play or exercise.<sup>38</sup> Childhood obesity is associated with hypertension, high cholesterol, Type II diabetes, sleep apnea, menstrual abnormalities, impaired balance and orthopedic problems, depression and low self-esteem.<sup>39</sup> Obese children have more primary care sick and mental health visits and more laboratory tests, and incur more health care costs.<sup>40,41</sup> Seventy

to eighty percent of obese adolescents become obese adults, subject to higher risks of diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, asthma and some types of cancer.<sup>42</sup>

In 2004, one-quarter of the county's public school students in grades five, seven and nine (approximately 5,250 children) were overweight.<sup>43</sup> A smaller proportion of Caucasian/white and Asian children are overweight than those of other racial/ethnic groups (see Figure 3).<sup>44</sup>

**Figure 3. Percentage of San Mateo County 5th, 7th and 9th Graders Who Are Overweight, by Race/Ethnicity (2003-04)**



Source: California Center for Public Health Advocacy, E-mail Communication, October 2005, as cited in San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, April 2006, *Healthy Communities San Mateo County: Blueprint for Prevention of Childhood Obesity: A Call to Action*. [http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/smc/departments/home/0,,1954\\_539700217\\_593847377,00.html](http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/smc/departments/home/0,,1954_539700217_593847377,00.html)

Note: Approximately 5,250 fifth, seventh and ninth graders in San Mateo County were overweight in 2003-2004. Of those, 300 were Pacific Islanders; 2,300 Latino/Hispanic; 280 African American; 500 Filipino; 1,400 Caucasian/white; and 400 Asian.

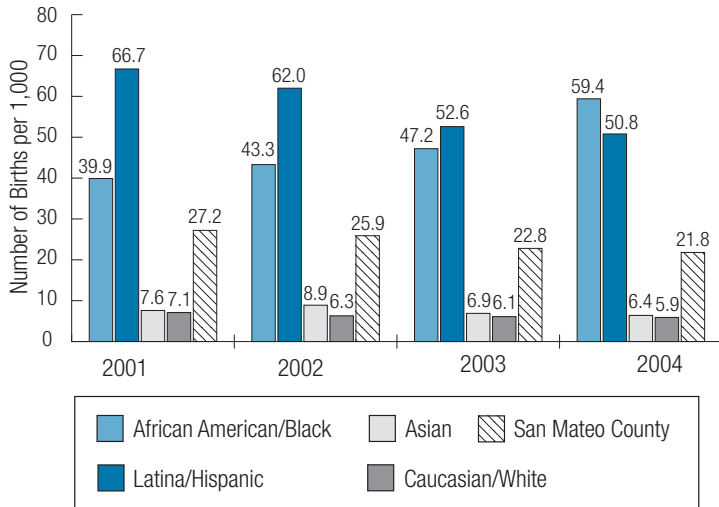
In addition, only 35% of fifth-, seventh- and ninth-grade students met all six California fitness standards in 2006, though fitness rates have improved in recent years.<sup>45</sup>

### Teen Birth Rate

Giving birth as a teen is associated with poorer outcomes for the mother and her child, as well as higher costs to taxpayers. Only 40% of teen mothers complete high school, compared with about three-quarters of mothers who delay childbearing until age 20 or 21.<sup>46</sup> On average, children born to teens are less likely to visit a doctor and are more likely to be born preterm and low birthweight.<sup>47</sup>

Across the nation, rates of teen sexual activity and births have declined since the early 1990s, although some of these trends appear to be slowing in the 2000s. The San Mateo County teen birth rate, which is lower than California's,<sup>48</sup> has fallen by 45% from 1995 to 2004 (from 40.0 to 21.8 births per 1,000 teens ages 15-19), although the rate of decline slowed during the early 2000s (see Figure 4). However, profound differences still exist in the teen birth rate across racial/ethnic groups. In 2004, rates for Latina/Hispanic and African American teens were eight to ten times higher (at 50.8 and 59.4 per 1,000, respectively) than they were for Caucasian/white and Asian teens (at 5.9 and 6.4, respectively).<sup>49</sup> The African American teen birth rate appears to have increased from 2001-2004, in contrast with the rates of other racial/ethnic groups, but the absolute number of African American teen births is small (29 in 2004), so it will be important to monitor this trend to see if it continues.

**Figure 4. San Mateo County Teen Birth Rate for Females Ages 15-19, by Race/Ethnicity**



Source: California Department of Health Services, Birth Statistical Data. Vital Statistics Query System. <http://www.applications.dhs.ca.gov/vsq/default.asp>. California Department of Finance, Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 1970-1999, 2000-2050. Retrieved 05/22/07.

Note: In 2004, 452 babies were born to 15- to 19-year-olds in San Mateo County. Of those, 327 were Latina/Hispanic; 29 African American; 26 Asian; and 49 Caucasian/white.

### Other Health Data

Children’s health also encompasses their mental and emotional health, behavioral problems, chronic illnesses such as asthma and other special health needs. Data are limited in these areas, but see [www.kidsdata.org](http://www.kidsdata.org) for some relevant indicators.