

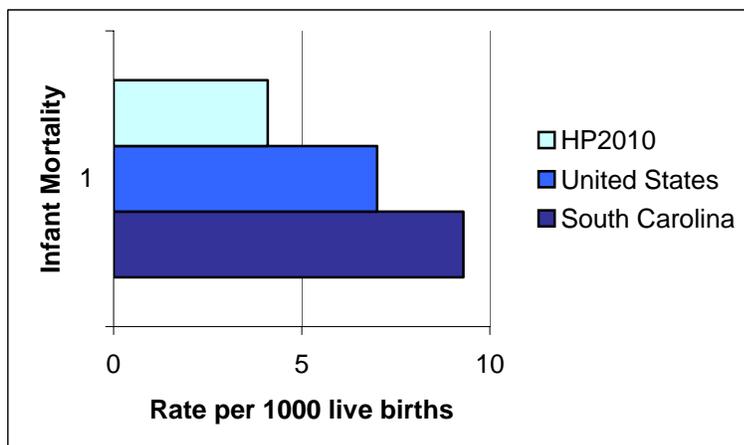
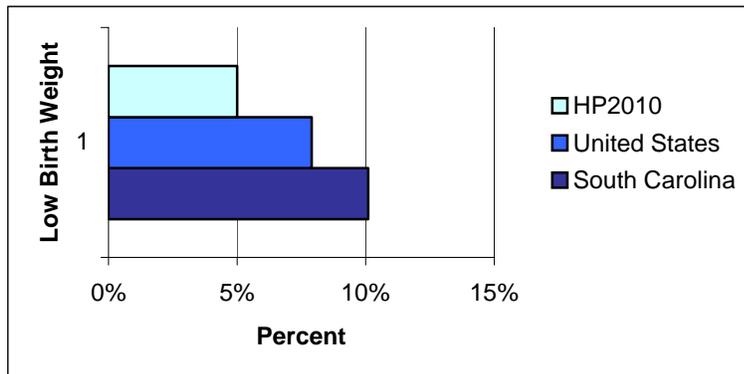
## Low Birth Weight and the Oral Health Link – A Fact Sheet

### What is Low Birth Weight?

A low birth weight baby is an infant that is born weighing less than 5.5 pounds. A very low birth weight baby is one that weighs less than 3.3 pounds at birth. The excess cost to the medical system of supporting a low or very low birth weight baby is staggering: while a normal birth with no complications might cost around \$2,100, a low birthweight baby incurs an average of \$16,500 in hospital costs and a very low birthweight baby an average of \$95,000. The total costs of low and very low birth weight babies in South Carolina is over \$160 million per year.

### Low Birth Weight in South Carolina: The Problem

South Carolina's rate of low birth weight is 10.1%. This is significantly higher than the national average of 9.0%, and has been rising in the last few years. South Carolina ranks 47<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states for the rate of low birth weight. The problem is significantly greater among African Americans, whose low birth weight rate is 14.6%, compared with 7.6% of White or Hispanic babies. South Carolina's rate of low birth weight and of infant mortality is more than twice as high as the *Healthy People 2010* goals.



- ✓ The low birth weight rate in the United States has risen from 7.2% to 7.9%, from 1993 to 2003.
- ✓ The low birth weight rate in South Carolina has risen from 9.3% to 10.1%, from 1993 to 2003.
- ✓ The rate of very low birth weight in South Carolina has risen from 1.8 to 2.1 per 1000 live births, while it has remained constant at 1.4

### The Link Between Low Birth Weight And Oral Health

- ✓ Women with periodontal disease were 3.5 times more likely than those without to give birth to a preterm or low birth weight infant
- ✓ Periodontal treatment significantly reduces the risk of having a preterm or low birth weight infant

### How Does Oral Health Impact The Development Of The Fetus?

One possible explanation is that bacteria from the mother's mouth may get into her bloodstream, and travel to the placenta, inducing premature labor. However, very little is known about the exact mechanism by which periodontal disease is linked to the birth outcome of an infant.

### How South Carolina Is Working To Improve The Oral Health Status Of Expectant Mothers

- South Carolina's Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) has included questions on oral health since 2004, which allow researchers to gather data on the current practices of expectant mothers in South Carolina.
- Education materials for expectant mothers are available to be distributed on an ongoing basis.

#### For Further Information:

<http://scangis.dhec.sc.gov/scan/prams/prams.aspx>

<http://www.sckidscount.org/kc05.asp?COUNTYID=47>

<http://www.marchofdimes.com/peristats>

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