

## One in 10 births around world premature: WHO

**GENEVA (Reuters)**—One in 10 of the some 130 million births around the world each year is premature, the vast majority in poorer countries where chances of survival are low, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Monday.

An article in the UN agency's January bulletin also reported a "dramatic rise" in pre-term births in a range of richer countries over the past 20 years, especially in North America and parts of Europe.

Based on studies from the mid-1990s to 2007, it said 85 percent of births before the normal 37-week human gestation period were in Asia, with some 70 million, and in Africa, with more than 40 million annually.

But the highest rates of pre-term deliveries against the overall total of births were in Africa, with an average of nearly 12 percent, and North America, with 10.6 percent, according to the article by WHO specialists and researchers.

In Europe, the figure was only 6.2 percent and in Latin America and the Caribbean just 9.1 percent.

Many premature babies in Asia and Africa have no access to effective care, said Dr Lale Say, a lead author of the article. One born at 32 weeks, weighing less than 2,000 grams, has little chance of survival, the WHO specialist wrote.

By contrast, an infant born at 32 weeks in a developed country is as likely to survive as one born at full term.

Evidence from the United States shows that about 50 percent of babies born after gestation periods as short as 22-25 weeks may survive, half of them without serious health problems by the time they reach 18 to 22 months of age, the article said.

The large numbers of premature births in Asia — mainly in and around the Indian sub-continent where the average is 11.4 percent — and Africa, where in the southern region it reaches 17.5 per cent, were largely due to absence of drugs to treat infections suffered by mothers during pregnancy.

## 'Octomom' doctor accused of 'gross negligence'

**LOS ANGELES (AFP)** — The fertility doctor who treated the woman who gave birth to octuplets last year has been accused of "gross negligence," a disciplinary complaint filed by the California Medical Board showed.

The executive director of the board, Barbara Johnston, said in the complaint that Dr Michael Kamrava had acted "beyond reasonable judgment" by helping Nadya Suleman conceive octuplets.

Suleman, 34, who already had six children, became a tabloid fixation last January when she successfully gave birth to octuplets in Los Angeles, and was dubbed "Octomom."

The case triggered widespread condemnation, with experts slamming Kamrava's West Coast IVF Clinic in Beverly Hills, which carried out the treatment.

Under guidelines issued by the American Society of Reproductive Medicine (ASRM), a woman Suleman's age should have no more than two embryos implanted.

Experts say multiple-birth babies are often born prematurely — Suleman's octuplets were born nine and a half weeks early — which puts them at significantly greater risk of long-term health problems.

In addition to questioning Kamrava's treatment methods, Johnston's complaint also faults the doctor for not referring Suleman to a mental health professional after she repeatedly sought fertility treatment.

# Should a parent read their teen's diary and/or journal?



This is a subject that has many answers and opinions. First and foremost parents need to remember, "When Safety Trumps Privacy!"

Teenagers earn their trust with their parents. Respecting each others privacy should always be priority, however if you fear your teenager is heading down a dark path, and is not willing to talk to you or a third party (therapist, guidance counselor, relative or adult friend), you may have to cross the line of trust.

What are some of the warning signs that may prompt you to cross this line?

Is your teen becoming very secretive? Sure, teens do like their privacy, however if you have a "gut feeling" something is deeper than a secret, you may have to cross that line.

Is your teen becoming withdrawn? Again, teens will develop some attitudes of not wanting to be with adults, however when it becomes extreme, it may be time to cross that line.

Is your teen changing peer groups? And

this is not into a better one, however to one that is less than desirable? You will again attempt to talk to your teen and find out why and what happened to the other friends.

Is your teens eating habits changing? Is your teen sleeping a lot? Bloodshot eyes? Do you suspect drug use?

Is your teen sneaking out? Becoming extremely defiant? Not respecting your boundaries?

Overall, is your teen slowly becoming a child you don't recognize?

When safety trumps privacy you are being a responsible parent. On the flip side, if your teen is not giving you any reason to "snoop" then you should respect their journal and/or diary and not open it.

What happens when you read the journal and find out more than you expected? This can be a very scary and shocking time and the last thing you want to do is explode. If your teen is struggling already, you don't need to add to this and possibly escalate it and/or give them reason to continue the

negative behavior.

More importantly, if you are reading that your child is being bullied or suffering with depression (whether it is from low self worth or not fitting in), it is imperative you attempt to open lines of communication. Starting a conversation about yourself and maybe some of the feelings you had at her age could be a great conversation opener.

If you don't feel you are able to do this, please reach out and be sure your teen get the help he/she may need. Teens need to know that we do care about them, we are very much concerned about their happiness and we are not trying to stop them from having fun, however if their safety is jeopardized, we need to be a parent first.

Should you read your teen's diary? That is a personal question only you can answer.

Remember writing can be very healthy for teens (and adults for that matter), so if your teen isn't giving you any valid reasons to "invade their privacy" - respect it.

(Source: examiner.com)

## Parents too busy to help children learn to talk, study suggests

Children spend so much time in front of the television and computer games, and so little time with adults that one child in six has difficulty learning to talk, according to an expert appointed by the government to improve young people's communication skills.

Research published today by Jean Gross, the new "communication champion" for children, found that twice as many boys struggle as girls, and almost one in four of all children who have problems talking and understanding speech get no help. Evidence showed that left unaided they risked developing mental health problems or getting into trouble with the law later in life, she warned.

"This really matters," Gross said. "Our ability to communicate is fundamental and underpins everything else."

Nearly a quarter of boys have some difficulties, and 5% experience significant trouble, the survey of 1,000 parents in England conducted by YouGov revealed. For girls, the figures are 13% and 2%.

While most children spoke their first word between 10 and 11 months, more girls than boys — 34% against 27% — did so before they reached nine months. Some 4% of children had not said their first word by the age of three. Dada and Daddy were the most common first words, beating Mama and Mummy by a considerable distance. After references to parents came "cat", "car", "no" and "dog".



Gross, an educational psychologist, said that while a proportion of children had always had speech problems there was anecdotal evidence of an increase in difficulties caused by social factors such as the amount of time they spent "exposed to screens of all kinds" and lack of time with their parents for face-to-face conversation.

"It's money — mortgages," she said. "People would feel able to share childcare or spend more time at home with their children if they didn't have to pay such astronomically high mortgages." Financial pressures through the housing market have made a big difference. Think about what children need. It's not expensive toys and big houses. It's you."

While there were many nurseries and playgroups with high quality staff who provided a good setting for learning, at poor quality daycare there was too much focus on physical factors — with staff "good at making sure nappies are changed and everyone's eating nicely" — but not enough on helping children develop emotional on communication skills. The research found social background made no marked difference, although children from more affluent families were reported to enjoy listening to stories and rhymes at a younger age than those from less well-off families.

Only 54% of the children who had problems received help from a speech and language therapist. Others received help from nursery and playgroup staff but 23% got no help at all.

(Source: guardian.co.uk)

## Poverty, poor education shave years off the life span

Smoking and obesity are known to lead to a host of life-threatening conditions from cardiovascular disease to cancer, but poverty may be even worse for your health, new research suggests.

According to a study by researchers at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, people whose household earnings are in the bottom one-third of the U.S. population, or up to twice the federal poverty level, lost 8.2 years of perfect health. Obesity related to a 4.2 year loss in perfect health, while smokers lost 6.6 years. Healthy life lost is a measure that includes health and life expectancy.

Dropping out of high school was also a marker for poorer health. High school dropouts had 5.1 fewer years of perfect health, according to the report in the December issue of the American Journal of Public Health.

Poverty and high school dropout rates are usually looked at as socioeconomic problems, rather than as health problems,



but both issues are as big a health problem as smoking or obesity, the study authors noted.

The researchers used data from previous national studies that measured health and life expectancy. After poverty, smoking and dropping out of high school, the top threats to health were non-Hispanic black race, obesity, binge drinking and being uninsured, in that order.

"While public health policy needs to continue its focus on risky health behaviors and obesity, it should redouble its efforts on non-medical factors, such as high school graduation and poverty-reduction programs," lead study author Dr. Peter Muennig, an assistant professor of health policy and management at the Mailman School of Public Health, said in a university news release.

Muennig explained that effective programs include reducing class size from kindergarten through third grade, and earned income tax credits.

(Source: HealthDay News)

## A parent's guide to bedwetting

If you have a child who wets the bed, you've probably heard lots of rumors about nutritional bedwetting solutions.

Limit liquids after 6 p.m. Avoid orange juice. Steer clear of spicy food.

In an effort to put an end to your child's bedwetting problem, you might be tempted to try them all. But before you do, keep in mind that making unnecessary dietary changes that don't work in an attempt to stop bedwetting could make you and your child even more unhappy and upset than you are now.

Doctors are very cautious when it comes to blaming specific foods for bedwetting, also called nocturnal enuresis, because there's very little evidence to back up the claims and much of it is anecdotal.

Here, WebMD investigates the myths and realities behind five food strategies to help control bedwetting in children.

### Spicy foods and bedwetting: Myth

Has taco night become a thing of the past at your house since you heard that spicy foods might trigger bedwetting? If so, it's time to break out the salsa and grab some guacamole — experts say there is no evidence spicy foods trigger nocturnal enuresis.

The myth stems from the fact that spicy foods are known to irritate the bladder in some people and doctors may recommend that people with urinary incontinence avoid them. But research hasn't found a connection between the consumption of spicy foods and bedwetting.

### Citrus and bedwetting: Another myth

Like spicy foods, citrus fruits — think oranges, lemons, and limes — can be bladder irritants, owing to their acidity. So you might think you're doing your child a favor by taking orange juice and lemonade off the table.

But, as is the case with hot and spicy foods, medical research has not demonstrated a link between eating citrus fruits and children's bedwetting, except possibly in rare instances of food allergy to citrus in some bedwetters.

### Food allergens and bedwetting: The jury's still out

Experts aren't yet sure whether food allergies contribute to bedwetting in some children. There is limited evidence suggesting that, in a very small percentage of cases, eliminating food triggers from the diet may help stop bedwetting.

For example, one study of 21 children with enuresis who also suffered from migraines and/or hyperkinetic behavior found that the enuresis went away in more than half of the children when they were put on a limited, low-allergen diet. But before you start making changes to your child's diet, keep in mind that this is a small-scale study done on a very specific population of children.

Some of the foods that could possibly have an effect on bedwetting include dairy products and artificial colorings.

### Caffeine and bedwetting: Fact

Caffeine, whether in food or drink, acts as a diuretic, meaning that it stimulates the bladder to produce more urine. So, one bedwetting solution that many experts recommend is to avoid caffeine in the late afternoon and evening.

Just because your child doesn't drink coffee doesn't mean he isn't ingesting caffeine. Teas, colas, and energy drinks often contain caffeine. And one food that many children love, chocolate, also contains caffeine. So you might want to be cautious about hot chocolate and desserts such as brownies or chocolate ice cream.

You don't need to add insult to injury and ban these foods from your child's diet — just try to make sure they're enjoyed earlier in the day so the effects have worn off before bedtime.

### Liquids before bed and bedwetting: Fact

The reason your child wets the bed is not just because there is too much liquid in the bladder. Think of it this way — even if you drank a gallon of water before bed, you'd wake up to empty your bladder rather than wetting the bed.

Nonetheless, limiting the amount of liquid your child drinks before going to sleep makes common sense because it will delay the filling of the bladder and give your child some extra time before bedwetting occurs. This added time could give your child more of a chance to wake up before wetting the bed.

Keep in mind that drinks aren't the only way your child gets liquids — certain foods, such as soup, yogurt, and many fruits and vegetables, have a very high water content.

### Tips for finding bedwetting food triggers

Because everyone is different, you and your child might want to determine if you can figure out any food triggers that seem to affect whether your child wets the bed.

Experts recommend keeping a bedwetting journal to record incidences of bedwetting and identify any patterns to the accidents.

Some children become quite interested in designing their own hypotheses to see whether certain actions or foods have an effect on staying dry overnight. Working to identify their own personal bedwetting triggers can be beneficial for kids on two fronts:

It gives them a sense of control over their bedwetting problem and allows them to take some responsibility for trying to fix it.

If they do identify a food they think prevents or causes bedwetting, having or avoiding that food may actually help, even if it is only due to the placebo effect.

### Putting nutritional bedwetting strategies to work

If you make the decision to have your child avoid certain foods in the evenings in an attempt to control your child's bedwetting problem, make sure the dietary changes don't come across as punishment for bad behavior.

(Source: webmd.com)