

## Study Shows Nurse-Family Partnership Helps to Prevent Childhood Obesity

### Mothers' Health Behaviors Influence their Children's Risks of Being Obese

The opportunity to influence a child's health and development begins even before the child is born, during pregnancy. The expectant mother's health behaviors will influence her child's health and development and this critical period will continue during the first two years of the child's life.

These early health behaviors can have enduring effects on the child's likelihood of being obese throughout his or her life course. The increasing rate of obesity among Americans has been shown to diminish quality of life, productivity and lifespan, while also posing a significant economic burden with the costs of health care. Children are more likely to be obese if they are born into low-income families. Nurse-Family Partnership provides a unique opportunity to promote behaviors that are crucial to reducing later obesity in children.

This intervention starts with Nurse-Family Partnership nurses reaching low-income women pregnant with their first baby. Each woman is paired with her very own personal nurse to guide her through her pregnancy and help her have a healthy baby. The nurse provides the expectant mom with information to help her make healthier choices on nutrition and prepare for the baby's arrival. The nurse is also there to monitor her weight gain and assess her health to promote healthier outcomes for both her and her baby. After the baby's arrival, the nurse continues to support the new mom to improve her child's health and development throughout the first two years of the child's life.

[Status of High Body Weight Among Nurse-Family Partnership Children](#), published by *The American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing*, shows that children participating in Nurse-Family Partnership were less likely to be obese if their mothers showed the following health behaviors:



**Expectant mother had limited weight gain during pregnancy to 28 pounds or less, versus expectant mothers who gained 40 or more pounds [12.0% of their children were obese versus 14.2% of their children were obese.]**



**If mother breastfed her infant for 20 or more weeks versus women who only breastfed for 1-3 weeks [11.2% of their children were obese versus 15.0% of their children were obese.]**



**If expectant mother began her pregnancy at a normal weight versus expectant mothers that began their pregnancy overweight [11.7% of their children were obese versus 14.5% of their children were obese.]**

If mother exhibited combinations of these health behaviors, the child was even more likely to have a healthy weight.