

## Infant deaths increase in South

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Cuts in welfare and poor medical care may be responsible for a sharp increase in infant deaths in Mississippi and neighboring states, doctors said.

"I don't think the rise is a fluke, and it's a disturbing trend, not only in Mississippi but throughout the Southeast," said Dr. Christina Glick, a neonatologist in Jackson, Miss.

The trend reverses decades of progress in reducing infant deaths in southern states with large black populations and extensive poverty, the New York Times reported Sunday.

Contributing factors may include cuts in welfare and Medicaid, poor access to doctors and a growing epidemic of obesity among potential mothers, the Times said.

Mississippi's infant mortality rate rose from 9.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2004 to 11.4 per 1,000 births in 2005. The national average in 2003, the last year for which such information was compiled, was 6.9.

Smaller increases also occurred in 2005 in Alabama, North Carolina and Tennessee. Louisiana and South Carolina saw increases in 2004 and have not yet reported for 2005.

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