

Childbirth deaths declining in U.S., new report finds

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(HealthDay)—Improved management of excessive bleeding and high

blood pressure during labor and delivery are helping to reduce the number of childbirth-related deaths in the United States, maternal health experts say.

A new report, from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), reflected initial findings from a national initiative to reduce complications and deaths during childbirth.

"For every maternal death, we know there are about 100 episodes of severe maternal morbidity," said Dr. Barbara Levy, referring to health conditions that affect pregnancy and childbirth. Levy is ACOG's vice president for health policy.

"Chronic conditions such as [high blood pressure](#), heart disease, obesity and diabetes are some of the leading causes of poor outcomes for women during [childbirth](#)," she said in an ACOG news release. "So, we want to herald these improvements in severe morbidity because they directly impact [maternal deaths](#)."

The report included outcomes from the first four states to join the initiative, called the Alliance for Innovation in Maternal Health (AIM). To date, 23 states are participating. They report progress on care practices that affect pregnancy-related conditions.

In the four states, severe maternal morbidity fell about 20 percent, to less than 2 percent of childbirths, the findings showed.

The results revealed progress in managing common conditions, particularly excessive bleeding—the leading cause of preventable maternal [death](#), according to the report.

"We are seeing significant adoption of these [improved care] measures at hospitals across the country, and it's reassuring," Levy said.

"Ultimately, it means that lives will be saved," she said.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [maternal death rates](#).

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