

NICHD

NATIONAL INSTITUTE
OF CHILD HEALTH AND
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

National Institutes of Health



What is the NICHD?

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), created by Congress in 1962, supports and conducts research on topics related to the health of children, adults, families, and populations. Some of these health topics include:

- Reducing infant deaths;
- Improving the health of women and men;
- Understanding reproductive health;
- Learning about growth and development;
- Examining problems of birth defects and mental retardation; and
- Enhancing function and involvement across the life span through medical rehabilitation research.

The NICHD is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the federal government's major medical research agency. For decades, people have turned to the NICHD for important health research advances and results. NICHD research focuses on these ideas:

- Events that happen prior to and throughout pregnancy as well as during childhood have a great impact on the health and well-being of adults;
- Human growth and development is a life-long process that has many phases and functions;
- Learning about the reproductive health of men and women and educating people about reproductive practices is important to both individuals and societies; and
- Developing medical rehabilitation interventions can improve the health and well-being of people with disabilities.

What does the NICHD do?

The mission of the NICHD is to ensure that every person is born healthy and wanted, that women suffer no harmful effects from the reproductive process, and that all children have the chance to fulfill their potential for a healthy and productive life, free of disease or disability.

For more information, please contact the NICHD Clearinghouse at:

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To reach this goal, the NICHD:

- **Conducts and supports laboratory research, clinical trials, and studies with people that explore health processes.** NICHD researchers examine growth and development, biologic and reproductive functions, behavior patterns, and population dynamics to protect and maintain the health of all people.
- **Examines the impact of disabilities, diseases, and defects on the lives of individuals.** With this information, the NICHD hopes to restore, increase, and maximize the capabilities of people affected by disease and injury.



- **Sponsors training programs for scientists, doctors, and researchers to ensure that NICHD research can continue.** By training these professionals in the latest research methods and technologies, the NICHD will be able to conduct its research and make health research progress until all children, adults, families, and populations enjoy good health.

Since it was founded, the efforts of the NICHD have successfully affected the lives of children, adults, and families in a number of ways, including:

- **Infant deaths** have dropped more than 70 percent, mostly due to NICHD research that introduced new ways to treat and prevent infant breathing problems, manage the care of premature infants, and reduce and prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- **Many causes of mental retardation** have been identified and, in some cases, eliminated as factors in brain development, as a result of NICHD research in preventing and correcting these conditions. Some of the causes of mental retardation that no longer pose threats to our children's health include Hemophilus influenzae Type B (HIB) meningitis (prevented by a vaccine developed by NICHD), phenylketonuria (PKU), congenital hypothyroidism, and jaundice.
- **Infertility** that at one time kept millions of couples from having babies of their own can now often be treated and reversed, thanks to NICHD research into fertility techniques and infertility treatments and causes.
- **Advances in social, physical, and behavioral treatments** for people with mental, developmental, and physical disabilities were made possible through NICHD research aimed at improving teaching methods, managing behavior, increasing mobility, and removing barriers to allow those with mental or physical disabilities to be active members of their communities. Progress made by the NICHD in rehabilitation and rehabilitation

technology has also helped to change society's attitudes about people with disabilities, which enables them to lead more normal lives.

- **Sound, scientific information about the effectiveness of different contraceptive methods** for women, men, and couples has resulted from NICHD research. In addition to developing scientific leads for new contraceptive methods, this research has provided important information about the factors that contribute to effective contraceptive use. Advances resulting from this research allow women, men, and couples to achieve their fertility desires.
- **Transmission of HIV from infected mothers to their babies** dropped from 25 percent to only 2 percent, following discoveries made by researchers at the NICHD and their colleagues in the medical and academic communities, and through the work of other NIH Institutes to reduce and prevent the spread of this disease. Treatment of HIV in children has also improved through the research efforts of the NICHD and other NIH Institutes.



What are the parts of the NICHD and what health topics do they study?

The NICHD is made up of three centers and two divisions that conduct and support research on specific health areas and health topics. The table below lists the names of these centers and divisions, provides a short description of each, and shows some of the topics they study. For more information about each part of the NICHD, visit their Web sites, at the URLs listed below.

Center or Division	Description	Health Topics
Center for Research for Mothers and Children (CRMC)	The CRMC is the NIH's main source of research and training in the areas of child and maternal health. The CRMC supports programs to ensure that mothers and families are healthy, that all babies are born healthy, and that all children reach adulthood to achieve their full promise. For more information, go to www.nichd.nih.gov/crmc .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pregnancy, birth, infancy, and child health and development ■ High-risk pregnancy, premature birth, low birth weight, infant mortality, and SIDS (biomedical and prevention research as well as education) ■ Developmental biology, physical growth and maturity, and nutrition ■ Pediatric, adolescent, and female HIV/AIDS ■ Over-the-counter and prescription drug safety and effectiveness in children and pregnant women ■ Birth defects, genetic disorders, developmental disabilities (including autism spectrum disorders), and mental retardation ■ Influences on learning (including reading and literacy), behavior, and social development
Center for Population Research (CPR)	The CPR carries out the main effort of the United States government in population studies through support of research and research training in the biomedical, behavioral, and social sciences. For more information, go to www.nichd.nih.gov/cpr .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Male and female reproductive biology, processes, and disorders affecting fertility and infertility ■ Contraceptive development and evaluation, family planning ■ Reproductive and family formation behaviors and influences ■ Sexually transmitted disease (STD) and HIV prevention ■ Determinants of population change and consequences of population change for the health and well-being of communities and societies
National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research (NCMRR)	The NCMRR sponsors projects and training to promote the health, productivity, independence, and quality-of-life of people with disabilities. The NCMRR supports programs to improve rehabilitation methods, technology, and life-long care so that those with physical disabilities from disease, injury, or disorder can live life to its fullest. For more information, go to www.nichd.nih.gov/about/ncmrr/ncmrr.htm .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rehabilitation, including improving movement, promoting neuroplasticity and recovery, adapting to a disability, and understanding the body's responses to injury ■ Health promotion and prevention of injury and disability ■ Technology development to improve the diagnosis, treatment, and everyday functioning of people with disabilities ■ Developing assistive devices and bioengineering technologies to promote function and participation ■ Evaluating rehabilitation effectiveness, specificity, access, and health policy ■ Training researchers and medical professionals in rehabilitation methods and techniques
Division of Epidemiology, Statistics, and Prevention Research (DESPR)	DESPR conducts epidemiological, statistical, and behavioral research on fertility, pregnancy outcomes, birth defects, child health, and adolescent health. DESPR has three branches: Epidemiology, Biometry and Mathematical Statistics, and Prevention Research. For more information, go to www.nichd.nih.gov/despr .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fertility, pregnancy, child growth, and development ■ Methods to promote healthy behavior ■ Congenital diseases, their effects and treatments ■ Vaccine testing, pediatric infectious disease and injury prevention, development and evaluation of treatments
Division of Intramural Research (DIR)	The DIR explores the biological and neurobiological, medical and behavioral aspects of normal and abnormal human growth. The DIR has five major clinical research and training programs in the areas of genetics, endocrinology, and maternal-fetal medicine: it also studies a variety of developmental models at its 18 research laboratories and branches. For more information, go to www.dir2.nichd.nih.gov .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Genes and genetic function, repair, and effects on disease and health ■ Hormones and their effects on growth, metabolism, and reproduction ■ Immune system development and disorders, including basic research and vaccine development ■ Nervous system development and disorders ■ Hormonal, genetic, and social influences on behavior ■ Maternal-fetal medicine, including high-risk pregnancy ■ Developmental models, including early development and cell specialization ■ Cell, theoretic, and physical biology ■ Biology and regulation of development in model and human systems

Does the NICHD have other health information?

The NICHD provides a variety of information in brochures, booklets, and other materials related to the health of children, adults, families, and populations. Much of this information is based on NICHD research into these areas. In addition, the NICHD supports health education and outreach campaigns.



The **Back to Sleep** campaign is designed to educate families and caregivers about putting healthy babies on their backs to sleep, to help reduce the risk of SIDS. The campaign offers brochures, fact sheets, stickers, posters, and materials that can help your community spread

this important message. For more information on Back to Sleep, call 1-800-505-CRIB. You can also visit the Back to Sleep Web site at www.nichd.nih.gov/backtosleep.



The **Milk Matters** calcium education campaign is designed to teach parents, children, and health professionals about the importance of calcium for children and teens. The NICHD offers Milk Matters brochures, booklets, coloring books, stickers, and posters. For more

information on Milk Matters, call 1-800-370-2943, or visit the Milk Matters Web site at www.nichd.nih.gov/milkmatters.

How can I get health-related information from the NICHD?

The **NICHD Clearinghouse** is your one-stop source for NICHD materials. Information specialists at the NICHD Clearinghouse can assist you in:

- Ordering brochures, booklets, fact sheets, research reports, and other publications.
- Finding health-related information from a variety of organizations.
- Obtaining information about the Back to Sleep and Milk Matters campaigns.

You can contact the NICHD Clearinghouse at:

Mail: **P.O. Box 3006
Rockville, MD 20847**
 Phone: **1-800-370-2943**
 Fax: **301-984-1473**
 Email: **NICHDclearinghouse@mail.nih.gov**
 Web site: **www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs.htm**

The **Public Information and Communications Branch (PICB)** is an in-house resource for information about the NICHD, its staff, and the research it conducts. PICB publishes and distributes information for the media, researchers, and health professionals. You can also learn more about the NICHD Centers and Divisions by contacting PICB at:

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