

## Infant Mortality by Birth Weight in Alberta

### Results from the 2011 birth cohort

Infant mortality and low birth weight are both internationally recognized indicators of population health. Infant mortality refers to all deaths occurring within the first year of life and is expressed as a rate per 1,000 live births. Births weighing less than 2,500 grams are considered to be low birth weight. As birth weight decreases, the likelihood of experiencing health and developmental problems increases. Low birth weight, premature delivery, and birth defects are among the most common risk factors that increase the risk of infant death. There are a number of risk factors related to low birth weight. Common risk factors include: maternal age (age less than 18 or age greater than 35), multiple births (e.g. twins, triplets), smoking, prematurity, maternal health status (e.g. infections, preeclampsia), alcohol and drug use, poor nutrition, and other factors.

### Infant deaths decrease with increasing birth weight

Of the 50,837 live births included in the analysis, there were 258 deaths occurring prior to the child's first birthday. This gives an infant mortality rate of 5.1 per 1,000 live births. Among the cohort, 6.7 per cent were considered to be low birth weight. Seventy-four per cent (190 deaths) of deaths occurred among those weighing less than 2,500 grams. Of these, 82.5 per cent were neonatal deaths (deaths within the first 28 days of life). Newborns weighing less than 1,000 grams accounted for 55.4 per cent of all infant deaths. Newborns weighing less than 500 grams had the poorest outcome with 96.1 per cent dying prior to their first birthday.

