The months a baby spends in the womb, along with the first 12 months after birth, are arguably the most important time of all for brain development. During this period, brain cells called neurons are forming connections with each other, creating the networks that underlie thinking, learning, and feeling. Low birth weight can disrupt early brain development. Low birth weight babies are at increased risk for developmental problems related to physical health, psychological adjustment, and intellectual functioning.

**Medical advancements are succeeding in reducing infant mortality. Fragile infants are now more likely to survive.**

1527 low birth weight babies were born in Shelby County in 2010. 91.5% of low birth weight babies born in 2009 survived their first year.¹

Nationwide, low birth weight survival rates have continuously increased.²

**Long-term difficulties related to low birth weight have remained relatively unchanged.**

- **6x** LONGER INITIAL HOSPITAL STAYS
- ≥ 15% NEUROLOGICAL IMPAIRMENTS¹
  - i.e. cerebral palsy
- 25x HIGHER INITIAL HOSPITAL COSTS¹
  - 42% covered by Medicaid
- ≤ 60% HEALTH Complications²
  - i.e. chronic lung disease or brain hemorrhaging
- ≥ 40% DEVELOPMENTAL PROBLEMS²
  - i.e. language delays, attention disorders, emotional disorders

**Early intervention can influence outcomes.**

For example, the Infant Health and Development Program (IHDP) is a national intervention for low birth weight and preterm infants that begins at birth and continues through age three. The program, which includes home visits, early education, and family support, has demonstrated positive effects throughout childhood and adolescence.*

**References:**

THE URBAN CHILD INSTITUTE IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN FROM CONCEPTION TO AGE THREE IN MEMPHIS AND SHELBY COUNTY, TN.

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