

These results are based on a survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control between November and December 1990. The results are published in the February 1993 issue of *Pediatrics*.

Prenatal iron supplements fatal to toddlers

Five children, aged 11 months to 18 months, died of iron overdose after ingesting prenatal iron supplements. The deaths occurred in Los Angeles between June 1992 and January 1993. In all of these reported incidents, the iron supplements involved were red or green disk-shaped tablets with a glossy sugar coating. All of the supplements were stored in child-proof containers with warning labels to keep children away from these supplements.

These recent deaths have prompted new warnings of the potential dangers of iron overdose.

Overall infant mortality declines

The overall number of infants who died before 1 year of age declined by 6% in 1990, compared with the year before. Most of the decline is attributed to improved treatment for respiratory distress syndrome.

However, the number of black infants who died continues to be higher than for white infants: 18 deaths per 1000 births compared

with 7.6 deaths per 1000 births. Low birth weight contributed to most of the deaths among black infants, while birth defects were blamed for most of the deaths among white infants.

In all, 38,351 infants died in 1990, down from 39,655 in 1989. These latest available figures put the United States in 20th place among infant mortality rates in 23 developed countries, up from 22nd place in 1989.

From the FDA

US clinical trials of RU 486 expected to begin

Clinical trials of the controversial abortion pill RU 486 are expected to begin next month, according to the French pharmaceutical company, Roussel-Uclaf.

"The new American administration has shown interest in testing the pill," says Andre Ulmann, MD, director of endocrinology at Roussel-Uclaf. At presstime, the company was reviewing offers from fewer than five companies to market the pill in the United States. Any company that would be licensed by Roussel-Uclaf will be required to train physicians in the safe administration of the drug.

Previously, the French pharmaceutical firm had expressed doubts about making RU 486 available in the United States because of the antiabortion climate—including the previous two administra-

tions' stance on this issue. The pill is available in France, Britain, and Sweden but only in government clinics.

Home cholesterol test approved

A home cholesterol test has been approved for marketing in the United States. Accumeter Cholesterol Self-Test (Chem Trak, Sunnyvale, Calif) was found to be as accurate as in-office and laboratory tests, with results available in 15 minutes. The home kit is expected to be on the market in September.

From HHS

More babies born to unmarried women

The National Center for Health Statistics reported 4.1 million births between 1991 and 1992. Single women gave birth to 1,165,384 babies during this period. These figures represent a 7% increase from last year's numbers and a 75% jump from the previous decade.

In 1990, the number of births to teenage mothers rose to 533,483, up nearly 3% from 1989 when 517,989 births were recorded among this population. Hispanic teenagers, in particular, had a sharp increase during this time: 100,000 births in 1990, up from 71,000 in 1985.