

# Health Care

## Halton weighs in with upbeat birth statistics

Halton women are waiting longer to have babies, the region's health and social services committee has heard.

And the babies they bear are often healthier than the provincial norm.

Those are the findings of a study issued by the Halton Regional Health Department and epidemiologist Terry Delmore.

The report, Reproductive Outcomes in Halton, evaluated birth and babies through data taken from 1991-95. It then compared the material with Ontario figures.

The numbers add up to good health.

Halton weighed in with fewer low birth weight babies than the provincial average. Low birth weight is defined as 2,500 grams or less, which translates into about five pounds, five ounces.

When tracking single births only (as opposed to twins or triplets), Halton's rate was 21 per cent less than the provincial rate over the five years.

That could be related to the age of the women having the babies, said Delmore.

Halton teens gave birth at half the rate of the province.

"We have a low birth rate among our teens and teens are more likely to have a low birth weight baby," he explained.

The low incidence of teen moms isn't

due to the availability of abortion, the report hinted.

Halton women had therapeutic abortions at about half the rate of provincial

in nine. Particularly, Halton women were far less likely to give birth to babies suffering from Down's Syndrome and congenital dislocation of the hip.

That is despite the fact that Halton women are waiting longer to become moms.

The number of women who are having babies at age 30-34 has jumped almost 60 per cent since 1981.

That has led to the rise of another phenomenon.

A closer look at low birth weight statistics revealed that although Halton came in well below the provincial average throughout, lighter babies were being born in the last two years of the study.

The answer, said Delmore, is multiple births.

"The number of multiple births has risen," he said. "The number of triplets has risen."

Though it was beyond the scope of the report to analyze why, Delmore could speculate.

"Older women are more likely to have multiple births and it could also be related to fertility drugs," he suggested. "I don't have that data."

The report was drafted to provide a snapshot of the area, said Halton's medical officer of health Dr. Bob Nosal.

"One of the reasons we do these reports is to pinpoint areas of concern," he said.

—By Irene Gentle, special



women, while area teens had a rate significantly lower than Ontario's.

In both Halton and the province, women aged 20-24 were responsible for the largest number of abortions.

Halton women also experience fewer still births, and infant deaths than their provincial counterparts. And Halton babies are less likely to be born with birth defects.

In a list of 10 common birth defects, Halton came out ahead of the province

### HEALTH DIGEST

#### Overeaters Anonymous meets

• Overeaters Anonymous-Acton meets Thursdays, 10 a.m. at the Acton Christian Reformed Church, Queen St. (Hwy 7).

• Do you worry about the way you eat? Overeaters Anonymous may have the answer with its 12-step program of recovery. Join this group, Sundays, 7:30 p.m. at Sacred Heart Parish, 238 Main St. Rockwood. Info: 702-8368.

#### FIND meets

FIND (Families in Non-Custodial Dilemmas) is a support group for non-custodial parents and meets every second Tuesday, 7-9 p.m. Call for location or to preregister (416) 410-1798.

#### Anxiety support

Are you suffering from anxiety/panic? Join our weekly support group. Please call TEACH at (905) 693-8771.

#### Tourette support

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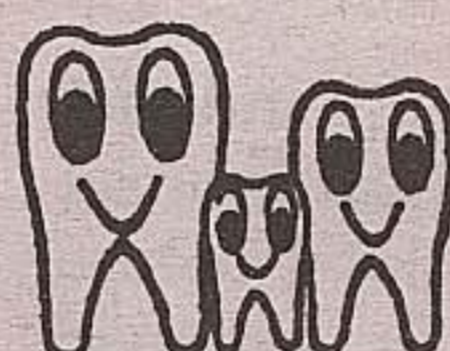


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