

NEWS RELEASE



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Oregon Public Health campaign wants to reach Latinas with information about having healthy babies

Social media, radio novellas, posters target Latinas with health messages

Oregon Public Health officials want Latinas to know what they can do to have healthier babies.

“Having a healthy baby starts before a woman gets pregnant. We want to increase knowledge about preconception health among Latinas, their families, health care providers and also community groups,” said Lesa Dixon-Gray, MSW, MPH. Dixon-Gray is a project coordinator for the Office of Family Health in the Oregon Public Health Division.

Research has shown that Latina women born outside the United States have better birth outcomes -- their babies are healthier at birth -- than the babies of mothers born in the United States. This is known as “The Latina Paradox.” This difference appears to result when the mothers come to the United States with healthy behaviors that they maintain. These habits include exercising and not smoking, which relate to their cultures’ emphasis on good nutrition, exercise and social support, explained Dixon-Gray.

This difference in birth outcomes is the reason the program has begun a 12-week campaign, called “Amor y Salud” (Love and Health). The goal of the campaign is to increase knowledge about preconception health among Latinas, between the ages of 18 and 29, in five Oregon counties: Marion, Lane, Douglas, Josephine and Jackson. A combination of radio novellas on Spanish-language radio stations, posters for health clinics, postcards and internet and social networking sites have been created.

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The radio novella, also called “Amor y Salud,” tells a young Latina’s story in 12 episodes, in both Spanish and English. As the novella progresses, Lourdes and her fiancé, Javier, make big decisions. Her parents and older sister Isabel help her prepare for her future family. When her friend Mercedes has a sudden tragedy, Lourdes learns why it’s important to take care of herself before pregnancy. The storyline uses humor and suspense to focus on key messages about preconception. Besides being available on radio, listeners can hear each episode and join the conversation on Facebook or MySpace.

“We hope the characters are familiar to our audience so that people can relate and see themselves in similar situations. The dialogue among the characters is meant to stimulate conversations about health and having children among Latino families,” said Dixon-Gray.

The objectives of the campaign are to increase knowledge that a Latina will have a better chance of having a healthy baby if, before she gets pregnant, she is able to:

- Take a multivitamin with 400 mcg of folic acid daily.
- Preserve traditional Latino culture that emphasizes family support, traditional diet and physical activity.
- Address personal behavior, such as maintaining a healthy weight and balanced diet; exercising; and avoiding alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs and toxic substances. It is also important to be emotionally, financially and physically ready to be a parent.
- Obtain medical care to be up-to-date on vaccines; get treated for chronic diseases and talk with a medical provider about any medications that might affect the pregnancy.

The project is 100 percent federally funded through U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration.

There is also an online survey each week. Participants who complete the survey are entered into a drawing for a chance to win a \$50 gift certificate from Amazon.com.

For more information, please visit

www.amorysalud.oregon.gov;
www.facebook.com/amorysalud; or
www.myspace.com/amorysaludoregon.

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