

Discover the **NICHD**

What is the NICHD?

The *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) is a health research agency within the federal government. Created in 1962, the Institute is part of the National Institutes of Health in the U.S Department of Health and Human Services.

Currently, the Institute supports and conducts research related to the health of children, adults, families, and communities, including:

- Reducing infant deaths
- Promoting healthy pregnancy and childbirth
- Investigating growth and development
- Examining problems of birth defects and intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Understanding reproductive health
- Improving the health and well-being of children, women, and men
- Enhancing function and involvement across the lifespan through rehabilitation research

What is the NICHD Mission?

The mission of the NICHD is to ensure that every person is born healthy and wanted, that women suffer no harmful effects from reproductive processes, and that all children have the chance to achieve their full potential for healthy and productive lives, free of disease or disability, and to ensure the health, productivity, independence, and well-being of all people through optimal rehabilitation.



What does the NICHD do?

NICHD research is guided by the following ideas:

- Events that happen before and during pregnancy and during childhood have a great impact on the health and well-being of children and adults.
- Developing and improving medical rehabilitation can improve the health and well-being of people with disabilities.
- Human growth and development is a lifelong process that has many phases and functions.
- Learning about the reproductive health of women and men and educating people about reproductive practices is important to individuals, communities, and societies.

The NICHD **conducts and supports laboratory research, data analyses, clinical trials, and other studies to explore health processes.** Institute researchers examine growth and development throughout the lifespan, biologic and reproductive functions, behavior patterns, and population dynamics to protect and maintain the health of all people. The Institute also **studies the impact of disabilities, diseases, and injuries on people's lives.** Using research-based information, the Institute aims to help restore, increase, and maximize the capabilities of people affected by such conditions. To ensure that this important research can continue, the NICHD also **trains and educates scientists, researchers, health care providers, and educators.**

How has NICHD research improved health?

During the last 50 years, NICHD research has helped to enrich the lives of children, adults, and families in many ways. For example, Institute research findings have played an important role in these health improvements:

- Overall infant death rates in the United States have dropped more than 70 percent.
- Survival rates for respiratory distress syndrome in infants have gone from 5 percent in the 1960s to 95 percent today.
- The rate of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) has dropped more than 50 percent.
- Mother-to-child transmission of HIV has dropped to less than 1 percent in the United States.
- Sonograms are used routinely and safely during prenatal care.
- Premature birth can be prevented or its likelihood greatly reduced among certain groups of women.
- Many causes of intellectual and developmental disability have been identified and either greatly reduced or eliminated as factors in growth and development, including phenylketonuria, *Hib* meningitis, spina bifida and other neural tube defects, congenital hypothyroidism, and Severe Combined Immunodeficiency.
- Women and their health care providers have effective, evidence-based options for the treatment of gynecological conditions, such as pelvic floor disorders and uterine fibroids.
- Men can determine if they are fertile and women can find out if they are pregnant in the privacy of their homes.
- Couples dealing with infertility have multiple options for having healthy pregnancies and babies of their own.
- Men, women, and their health care providers can make decisions about contraception that are based on decades of scientific evidence.
- Early treatment and rehabilitation methods help to improve overall health and function of people with physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities.





How does the NICHD do its research?

The NICHD uses two main methods to conduct its research: NICHD scientists do the research at the NIH or another location—called **intramural research**—or the Institute funds scientists at universities and research organizations to do the research at their own locations—called **extramural research**.

Each of these components address topics that fall within the NICHD's research mission of health and human development throughout the lifespan.

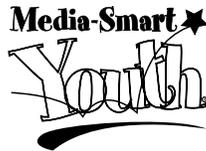
- The **Division of Intramural Population Health Research** conducts research and research training on the earliest stages of human development through adulthood. This Division studies: pregnancy and fetal growth, fertility and infertility, women's reproductive health, child growth and development, health and risk behaviors (including teen driving), birth defects, management of chronic diseases, and biostatistical studies. *For more information, visit <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/about/org/diph>.*
- The **Division of Extramural Research** coordinates and supports research and research training on the health of infants, children, women, men, families, and populations within many contexts. Its 12 branches support research and training on: birth control/contraception, pregnancy, drug safety, HIV/AIDS and infectious diseases, child development and behavior, pediatric trauma and critical illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities, women's health (including gynecological health), men's health, fertility and infertility, growth and development, obesity, and population science. *For more information, visit <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/about/org/der>.*
- The **Division of Intramural Research** conducts research and research training on aspects of normal and abnormal human growth. Through its 11 research programs and the Office of the Scientific Director, the Division studies: hormones and disorders related to hormones, development and disorders of the immune system and nervous system, high-risk pregnancy, infertility, genetics, rare disorders, growth and obesity, biology of development and metabolism, and pediatric imaging. *For more information, visit <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/about/org/dir>.*
- The **National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research** coordinates and supports research and research training to improve the health, productivity, independence, and quality of life of people with disabilities from diseases, injuries, or disorders. The Center coordinates and supports research on rehabilitation methods, technologies, and optimal care for those affected by stroke, musculoskeletal disorders, spinal cord injury, and traumatic brain injury, as well as on new orthotics, prosthetics, and other assistive technologies and devices. *For more information, visit <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/about/org/ncmrr>.*

Did you know that the NICHD also supports health education and outreach?

The NICHD supports several education and outreach efforts that aim to put research findings into action to improve health.



The **Safe to Sleep**[®] campaign (formerly the Back to Sleep campaign) educates parents, caregivers, and health care providers about ways to reduce the risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep-related causes of infant death, such as suffocation. The campaign offers educational materials for various audiences, in English and Spanish, and accredited continuing education modules for health care providers. For more information, call 1-800-505-CRIB (2742), or visit <http://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov>.



Media-Smart Youth: Eat, Think, and Be Active![®] is an interactive after-school program that teaches young people ages 11 to 13 how media influence their health, nutrition, and physical activity. The program combines media literacy and youth development with up-to-date research findings and federal recommendations about nutrition and physical activity. Part of the NIH *We Can! (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition)* Program, these research-based materials are available to adults interested in leading the program. For more information, call 1-800-370-2943, or visit <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/msy>.



The **National Child and Maternal Health Education Program (NCMHEP)** relies on a coalition of health care provider associations, federal agencies, maternal and child health organizations, and other partners to review, translate, and spread evidence-based messages related to maternal and child health. A current focus area of the Program encourages women to wait until at least 39 weeks of pregnancy to deliver unless there is a medical reason to deliver earlier. Visit <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/ncmhep/isitworthit> to learn more. For more information on NCMHEP, visit <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/ncmhep>.

How can I get information from the NICHD?

Health Information

The NICHD website provides detailed information about a variety of health conditions and topics.

Visit <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/Pages/index.aspx> for an alphabetical listing of more than 75 health topics related to the NICHD mission. You can also view, download, and order NICHD publications from the website.

The **NICHD Information Resource Center** provides information to the public on health issues within the Institute's research portfolio. Trained information specialists will take your call and direct you to health information, related resources, and materials ordering (Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m.–4 p.m. EST).

Phone: 1-800-370-2943 (TTY: 1-888-320-6942)

Fax: 1-866-760-5947

Email: NICHDInformationResourceCenter@mail.nih.gov

Mail: P.O. Box 3006, Rockville, MD 20847

Facebook: <http://on.fb.me/1ayv5RL> **Twitter:** @NICHD_NIH

YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/nichdvideos>

Other Information

- **Clinical trials:** To learn more about the Institute's clinical research or to view a listing of NICHD clinical trials, visit <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/clinicalresearch/Pages/index.aspx>.
- **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA):** The NICHD handles FOIA requests in accordance with all federal laws and requirements. For more information, including how to submit a FOIA request, visit <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/about/Pages/foia.aspx>.
- **Media inquiries:** Members of the media can contact the Institute's Public Communications Branch at (301) 496-5133 for information about NICHD news releases or to schedule interviews with NICHD scientists. Institute news releases and other news items are available at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/news/Pages/index.aspx>.