Premature birth occurs prior to the completion of 37 weeks of pregnancy. In 2006, the national preterm birth rate rose to 12.8 percent (or 1 in 8) of all births. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, babies born prematurely are at higher risk of needing hospitalization and having long-term health problems than babies born at full gestation. Additionally, these babies account for more than 33 percent of infant mortalities.² Certain life factors place women at greater risk of delivering pre-term, including late or no prenatal care, tobacco use, use of alcohol/illicit drugs, domestic violence, inadequate social support and stress. The African American population is disproportionately affected with a national rate of 18.5 percent. (In Missouri & Illinois, the rate among African Americans is 18.9 percent and 19.1 percent, respectively). Women under age 17, women over age 35, and women living in poverty are also at an increased risk of delivering pre-term.