

VIVA VIEWS

A Newsletter From A Study of Health For the Next Generation

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

When we originally planned Project Viva, we thought it would be great to be able to follow the Viva babies for many years. That's because we already know that some childhood, even adulthood, diseases may have their beginnings very early in life, perhaps before birth. One of these diseases is asthma, which is becoming ever more common in young children. It may be true, for example, that nutrition, stress, and hormone levels during pregnancy or in early infancy could affect whether children get asthma and its close cousins, eczema and hay fever. So we feel very fortunate to have gotten additional funding from the National Institutes of Health to look at these issues in Viva children up to the age of three to four years.

Already in Project Viva you have helped us so much with important questions about the health of women and children. Now we are asking you to continue with us in this exciting new part of the project. So when we contact you, either to fill out a questionnaire, or come in for a personal visit, please help us again! Each one of you makes a big difference! And as always, please let us know if you have any suggestions to make Project Viva better.

Matthew W. Gillman, MD, SM

OUR NUMBERS ARE GROWING!

Viva now has over
2,600 women enrolled, and so far,
over **2,100** Viva babies
have been delivered!

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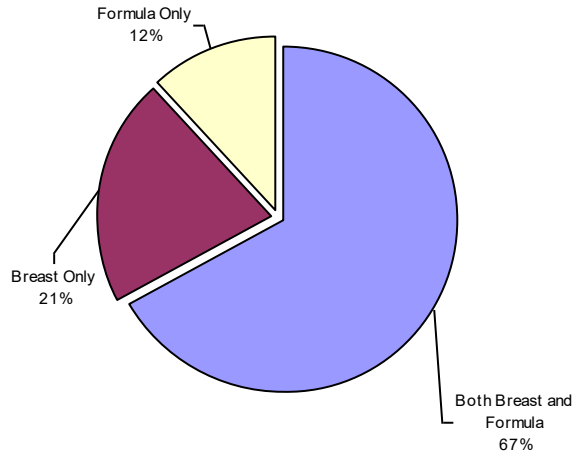
FACTS ABOUT ASTHMA

- Asthma is an inflammation of the airways. The inflammation causes swelling, muscular contractions and mucous production. These changes cause the airways to become blocked or narrowed. The effects are usually temporary, but they can cause shortness of breath, breathing trouble, and other symptoms.
- More than 10 million adults and 5 million children in the United States have asthma and those numbers are rising. Between 1982 and 1994, the number of people with this disease increased by 61%.
- Asthma is the most common chronic childhood disease. National data indicate that in the past 15 years, the number of children diagnosed with asthma has more than doubled.
- Most children with asthma will develop it by the age of 5 but it can occur at any age, even in infancy.
- Often asthma is not recognized. Some symptoms of asthma are wheezing, chronic cough, shortness of breath and tightening in the chest.
- There is no known cure for asthma, but it can be treated. If treated, there are few, if any, chronic symptoms. Quick-relief medications provide immediate relief, relaxing the muscles around the airways. These medications are inhaled. Long-term control medications are taken orally or inhaled. They work over time to reduce the frequency and severity of the attacks.

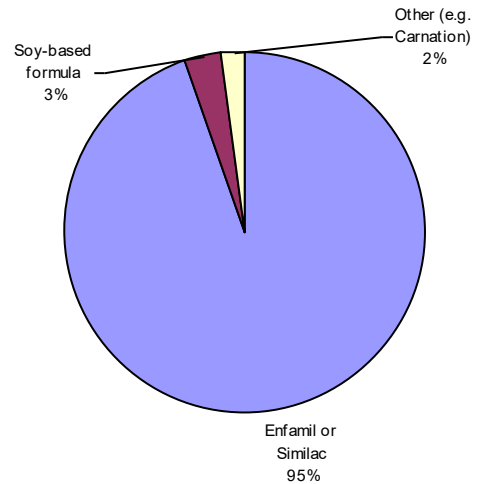
There is still much to learn about what causes asthma and how to prevent it.

STATS ABOUT VIVA MOMS AND THEIR BABIES

88% of Viva Babies have been breastfed at least once in their lives
At the six-month visit it was reported that Viva babies are fed...



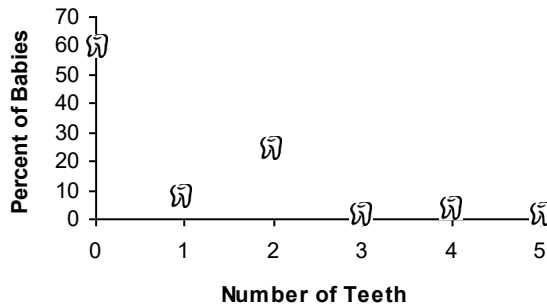
When they aren't breastfeeding, Viva babies usually drink...



53% of our moms feel that they're not getting enough sleep!



Viva Chompers Between 6 months to 1 year



FAVORITE CUISINE OF OUR VIVA BABIES...

CEREAL
 FRUIT
 VEGETABLES

LEAST FAVORITE CUISINE OF OUR VIVA BABIES...

PEANUTS
 FISH

TOP 3 NAMES FOR GIRLS

Julia
 Sarah
 Lauren

TOP 3 NAMES FOR BOYS

Andrew
 Matthew
 John

54% of our Viva babies have pets, with cats being the "purr"ferred pal!



PROJECT VIVA: PROGRESS AND PROMISES

In November 2001, we had an informational session for our participants to share more about Project Viva. The Investigators spoke about our progress thus far as well as our plans for the future. Here's some of the information that was discussed.

Project Viva is a study of health for the next generation, which means we're interested in the health of your children not only right after birth but also as they grow and develop. The success of the study depends upon your continued participation and we hope you will remain involved in our innovative research. Currently, Project Viva is one of very few studies in the U.S. that enrolls mothers during pregnancy AND follows up with their children.

Some of the original aims of Project Viva are to look at mothers' diets, oral health, stress, hormones, and birth outcomes. From your food questionnaires we are able to gather information about intake of foods like fish, fruits, and vegetables that contain nutrients that may affect pregnancy outcomes and child development.

In other questionnaires we gather information about chronic and acute stressors including financial stress, discrimination, depression, and pregnancy anxiety. We relate these data to length of gestation and levels of placental hormones in the blood. We are also interested in stress buffers such as religion, social support, coping styles, and active responses to stress.

We hope to find a connection between some of these aspects of pregnancy and birth statistics like birth weight, length of gestation, and pre-eclampsia (toxemia), a condition that occurs in about 5% of pregnancies.

As you can see, we are starting to uncover information that we think will help women have healthy children for years to come. Already we have gained information about blood pressure, feeding, and brain development on some of the children in Project Viva. We are beginning to focus on why children develop conditions such as asthma, hay fever, and eczema. Additionally, we will look at childhood growth and obesity.

FLASHBACKS FROM THE 6-MONTH VISIT

Do you remember packing up your child's travel bag and checking your purse twice to make sure you remembered the Project Viva questionnaire? You may also remember how quickly the hour passed while you and your child participated in an interview, questionnaires, and measurements.

Some of the visit highlights included:

- **Weight and length:** Although it might be possible for us to get these measurements from each child's 6 month pediatric appointment, we get much better measurements with our research equipment. For instance, our length board is not usually used at the pediatric appointments.
- **Blood pressure:** Taking blood pressure at the hospital and 6 months after delivery is one of the unique aspects of Viva. Almost all of our Viva babies are comfortable during this measurement, and they are extremely curious about the blood pressure machine's lights and beeps.
- **Visual Recognition Memory Test:** This test involves having your baby look at a series of infant pictures while sitting on your lap. According to our Viva babies, looking at baby faces is the best part of the visit!
- **Visual Acuity Test:** A unique assessment to evaluate vision in infants. Visual acuity is a fun test where the research assistant continues to show cards with increasingly finer lines to measure babies' vision for fine detail.

We would like to thank the mothers and babies who made the trip to meet with us for visit four.

It is always nice to catch up with Viva moms and meet their newest family member!

VIVA VOICES: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE FOLLOW-UP

Q: I thought I was done with Project Viva. Why am I being contacted again?

A: We recently received additional funding to follow up on our Viva babies until age three or four. We are hoping for your continued participation. The information we get is so much more valuable when every Viva participant stays a part of the project!

Q: When will I receive something about the follow-up study?

A: You will receive a packet of forms from us in the mail about a month after your child's first birthday. It will include a questionnaire, a contact information form, and a consent form for the follow-up study if you haven't already signed it.

Q: How long do I have to fill out the questionnaire?

A: We ask that you try to send it back to us within two weeks, but we will accept it at any time. It is never too late to send us your forms!

Q: How long does the questionnaire take to complete?

A: It should take you about 20 – 25 minutes.

Q: Do I have to bring my child in for this visit?

A: No. The follow-up study is done almost entirely through the mail. The only time we may ask you to bring in your child is at the third visit, when your child is three years old.

Q: If I never enrolled my child in Project Viva, am I eligible to participate in the follow-up study?

A: YES! Even if your baby was not enrolled in the initial phase of Project Viva, you may still sign up for the follow-up study.

A Very Special Thank You!

This study is funded by: *The National Institutes of Health, The March of Dimes Foundation, & The U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.*

Special thanks to: *SCHOLASTIC, Inc., CVS, Costco, RS Athletics, and Toys 'R Us for their generous contributions.*

Thanks also goes to: *Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates, The Brigham and Women's Hospital, The Beth Israel-Deaconess Medical Center, and you. We couldn't do this without you!*

Please share your comments and ideas with Viva Staff.
Tell us what you like most or least about being a part of Project Viva.
What was your delivery like? What motivated you to join Project Viva?
Call our hotline at (800) 598-4247 ext. 86067.
Email us at Project_Viva@hphc.org or fax us at (617) 509-9853.

We are interested in what you have to say!

Viva Views

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Mailing
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