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Student Birth Spacing Recommendation Becomes Public Policy

A study by four University of San Francisco nursing students recommends that mothers wait two and a half to three years between babies to avoid risks to their own health and that of their children. After presenting the birth spacing study to the Contra Costa County Department of Public Health, their recommendations have been adopted by public health nurses county-wide.

Laureana Deleon and Maribeth Riday, who graduated from the School of Nursing's Clinical Nurse Leader program in December, became interested in the issue of birth spacing while doing clinical rotations in Contra Costa County working with pregnant women. Students Chris Figueroa and Angela Canfield also worked on the research.

"Most of the moms we saw were having babies one after another," Deleon said. "A lot of things can happen without proper birth spacing."

According to their study, problems associated with having babies too close together include increased risk of miscarriage and premature birth, and maternal health complications. The students' paper is based on a review of existing studies and literature on birth spacing, which they said provides clear evidence for using child spacing education for high risk populations in addition to contraceptive education.

"Child spacing education has a history of being promoted in underdeveloped countries with success, but studies show that child spacing has a place in this country as well," Deleon said. "Our passion is for public health nursing. It is great to see our study having a real impact on the community."

Mary St. John-Seed, associate professor of nursing who taught the course, said when the director from Contra Costa County told her they were implementing birth spacing into their teaching protocol with new mothers based on the students' presentation, she "saw it as an impressive example of USF nursing students assisting the community in implementing evidenced-based practice." ■



Mothers should wait two and a half to three years between babies, according to a study by USF nursing students.