Birth, marriage, death, disease, and accidents are among the vital statistics collected to help measure the health and well-being of the population. Elkhart County had 2,720 births in 1996, a change of 96 births from five years earlier in 1992 (3.7 percent increase). Of those live births, 422 were to teen mothers under age 20 — or 15.5 percent of all births in the county. Most births occurred to women between the ages of 20 to 29 (59.2 percent) and 30 to 39 (24.2 percent). There were 27 births to women age 40 and older in 1996, and 22 in 1992. The number of teen pregnancies in 1995 was 499, compared to 486 (16.3 percent) in 1990. There were 1,669 marriages in 1996, and 1,604 in 1990.

Among Elkhart County two-year old children in 1996, 85 percent had been fully immunized. Elkhart County had 1,316 deaths in 1996. Of those deaths, 384 (29.2 percent) were due to heart disease and 295 (22.4 percent) due to cancer. Motor vehicle accidents claimed 36 lives in 1996.

Sadly, in fiscal year 1997, 832 Elkhart County children were reported abused and 967 neglected; of those, 121 were substantiated as physical abuse, 127 as sexual abuse, and 306 as neglect. The percent of cases substantiated was 29.8 percent for abuse and 31.6 percent for neglect. The rate of abuse and neglect per 1,000 children under age 18 in Elkhart County was 12.5 in 1997, compared to 19.1 in 1996.

Births by Age of Mother

Questions to ponder...
Are low-cost health services such as immunization for children available to the working poor? What programs can help children and teens at risk? Are services available to help mothers of newborns? Do schools or other organizations provide education to children on drug and alcohol abuse? Is there a safety-net available to abuse victims?