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## Obstetrics

**FETAL LUNG MATURITY** The ratio of lecithin to sphingomyelin in phospholipids extracted from amniotic fluid has been suggested as a useful index of fetal lung maturity. Since surfactant (a lecithin complex whose time of appearance in the lung is related to gestational age) is decreased in infants with hyaline membrane disease, delay in delivery of these infants has been advocated when the lecithin to sphingomyelin ratio (L/S) is found to be less than 1.5.

Amniotic fluid from 90 pregnant women was sampled. In 47, the amniotic fluid had L/S ratios below 1.5. Among the infants of these 47 mothers, five developed asphyxia or transient respiratory difficulty, two had hyaline membrane disease, and two were stillborn. In the group with L/S ratios above 1.5 (i.e., 43), four infants developed asphyxia or transient respiratory difficulty. Although the L/S ratio appears to be a reliable indicator of gestational age, it is not a clear indicator of fetal lung maturity or postpartum respiratory difficulties. (Nakamura, J.: *Total Lipids and the Lecithin-Sphingomyelin Ratio of Amniotic Fluid: An Antenatal Test of Lung Immaturity?* *Am. J. Obstet. Gynecol.* 113:363-366, 1972.)