



Pregnancy Intendedness



PRAMS, the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System, is a surveillance project of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and health departments. PRAMS ask participants, "Thinking back to just before you got pregnant, how did you feel about becoming pregnant?" An essential indicator for pregnancy outcomes since unintended pregnancy has been associated with late entry into prenatal care, poor nutrition during pregnancy, and low birth weight babies.

Early pregnancy detection is essential for improving pregnancy outcomes as the first trimester is a critical window of fetal development; however, there has been no description of trends in the timing of pregnancy awareness among US women. According to Ayoola et al., The combination of later pregnancy awareness and initiation of prenatal care and continuation of high-risk behaviors into pregnancy can lead to a higher risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes, including birth defects, preterm delivery, low birth weight, and neonatal intensive care admissions



Why Do Unintended Pregnancies Matter?

Unintended pregnancies are by definition unplanned, which means these women may be entering pregnancy with behavioral risks, genetic risks, and unmanaged chronic conditions that affect their health and the health of their babies. Mothers with unintended pregnancies are less likely to adopt healthy behaviors during pregnancy (such as avoiding illegal drugs, tobacco, or alcohol). In addition, they are less likely to seek prenatal care in the first trimester. Mothers with unintended pregnancies have a greater risk of delivering low birth weight babies or babies who die before their first birthdays. Mothers with unintended pregnancies are at greater risk of physical abuse, and their relationships with their partners are at greater risk of ending. Mothers ages 35 years and over are at increased risk when they have unintended pregnancies. These risks may include but are not limited to dysfunctional labor, C-section, gestational diabetes, and hypertension. The fetus may be at increased risk for low birth weight, stillbirth, and chromosome abnormalities.



What Can Be Done?

Screen women of reproductive age about their pregnancy intentions at all clinical encounters and offer contraceptive options where appropriate. Screening and counseling men and women of reproductive age about risk behaviors, genetic conditions, and infectious and chronic diseases. ∪ Educate providers and the public about the risks of unintended pregnancy. Improve knowledge about using contraceptives and make them readily available. Encourage men and women to talk with their health care provider about creating a reproductive life plan. Support publicly funded family planning services, which prevent each year in the United States nearly two million unintended pregnancies, including more than 800,000 abortions, by providing voluntary contraceptive services to young and low-income women



"Protecting yourself and making healthy choices is more important now than ever for women trying to become pregnant in the New Year, particularly during this global pandemic," said Dr. Rahul Gupta, Chief Medical and Health Officer, Senior Vice President, Interim Chief Scientific Officer at March of Dimes.



You can adopt behaviors to increase your chances of having a healthy, full-term pregnancy and baby. Here are six tips to follow:

- Protect yourself from COVID-19. Stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by wearing a face mask and practicing social distancing. Remember to check for new guidance from the CDC to keep you and your family safe.



- Be sure to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day. Folic acid is a B vitamin proven to help prevent severe birth defects of the brain and spine. Before becoming pregnant and during pregnancy, take a multivitamin containing 400 mcg of folic acid every day to help prevent severe birth defects. Eat foods that contain folate (e.g., lentils, green leafy vegetables), as well as foods made from fortified grain products (e.g., bread, pasta) and those made from fortified corn masa flour (e.g., cornbread, corn tortillas).



- Get a pre-pregnancy checkup. See your health care provider about managing your health conditions and creating a treatment plan before becoming pregnant. Speak with them about all of the prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and supplements you are taking, especially before stopping or starting any medication. Creating a treatment plan for your health condition before you are pregnant can help keep you and your developing baby healthy.
- Stay up-to-date on vaccines, including the flu shot. Speak with your health care provider about the vaccines you need during pregnancy to help protect yourself and your baby against serious diseases. Get the flu shot annually before or during pregnancy and get the whooping cough vaccine between 27 and 36 weeks of pregnancy. Also, make sure everyone in your family is up-to-date on their vaccinations to help prevent the spread of diseases.



- Before you get pregnant, try to reach a healthy weight. Talk to your health care provider about getting to a healthy weight before getting pregnant, as being overweight or underweight can affect your fertility and increase the risk of having a baby with a birth defect and other complications. Maintain a healthy lifestyle that includes eating healthy foods and regular physical activity.
- Avoid substances that are harmful during pregnancy.
 - Smoking substances such as tobacco during pregnancy can cause dangerous chemicals to damage the placenta or reach the baby's bloodstream. Smoking cigarettes can cause certain birth defects, like cleft lip and palate.



For More Information

[Getting pregnant \(marchofdimes.org\)](https://marchofdimes.org)

[Before or between pregnancies \(marchofdimes.org\)](https://marchofdimes.org)

[Pregnancy \(marchofdimes.org\)](https://marchofdimes.org)