

Health Care Access & Quality

Exploring the Impact of Early and Adequate Prenatal Care

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INTRO & BACKGROUND

What is prenatal care?

- Prenatal care is the health care received while pregnant, to take care of both mother and baby.
- Includes checkups and routine testing to find and prevent adverse outcomes.

Why is it Important?

- Regular prenatal care can allow mothers to follow a healthy, safe diet; get regular exercise as advised by health care provider; and avoid exposure to harmful substances (National Institutes of Health, 2017).
- Getting early and regular prenatal care improves the chances of a healthy pregnancy; it can even begin before pregnancy.
- Prenatal care also reduces the risk of pregnancy complications; it can control existing conditions to prevent serious complications and their effects (National Institutes of Health, 2017).



WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The goal of healthcare access and quality is to increase access to comprehensive, high-quality health care services. Not all expectant mothers are able to access prenatal care due to socioeconomic factors.

EFFECTS OF INADEQUATE CARE

- Babies born to mothers who lack proper prenatal care are 3x more likely to have a low birth weight and 5x more likely to die than those born to mothers who receive adequate prenatal care (Office on Women's Health, 2019).
- Women without prenatal care are 7x more likely to give birth to premature babies (Wen, 2017).
- Inadequate prenatal care is associated with increased neonatal death in both the presence and the absence of antenatal high-risk conditions (Chen et al., 2017).

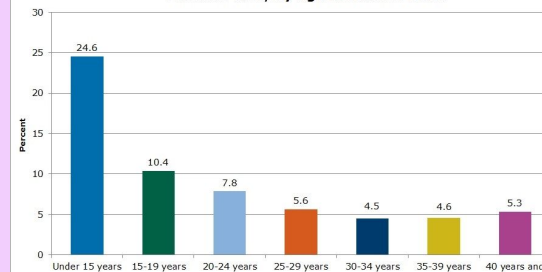
SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS

There are multiple factors present that could influence and impact a woman's access to prenatal care.

- Poor education/pregnancy at a young age typically result in insufficient prenatal care (Blakeney et al., 2019).
- Single women are 3x less likely to receive prenatal care than married women (Vintzileos et al., 2002).
- Lower educational levels result in insufficient use of prenatal care (Vintzileos et al., 2002).
- A negative experience with healthcare or lack of a support system are less likely to seek out prenatal care (Vintzileos et al., 2002).
- Lack of health insurance or living in a state that declined the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion are less likely to seek out prenatal care (Novoa, 2020).
- African American mothers are twice as likely to have an infant who dies by their first birthday (Taylor et al., 2019).

Figure 3

Percentage of Births to Mothers Receiving Late or No Prenatal Care, by Age of Mother: 2014*



*Note: Data exclude those jurisdictions using the 1989 revision of the birth certificate (4 states, representing 4 percent of births). Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, VitalStats online tool. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/vitalstats.htm>.

PROGRAMS AND INTERVENTIONS



- The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program gives pregnant women and families, particularly those considered at-risk, necessary resources and skills to raise children who are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy and ready to learn (Maternal/Women's Health, 2021).
- Healthy Start program offers prenatal, postpartum, well-baby, adolescent care, reproductive life planning, outreach, and women's health to communities of racial/ethnic minorities, poverty, low education with limited access to care (Maternal/Women's Health, 2021).
- Financial support services such as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and Medicaid.

CONCLUSION

Prenatal care is imperative for keeping the mother and baby healthy during and after pregnancy. From conception to delivery, prenatal care plays an active role. Pregnant mothers having early, adequate prenatal care ensures the highest quality of care and prevention for themselves and their growing baby.

Our teams' research highlights the importance of behavior change and communication from an interprofessional education standpoint. With a high percentage of teenagers lacking proper prenatal care due to lack of education or a desire to conceal the pregnancy, the responsibility to educate the patient falls on a broader scope of professionals, such as parents, teachers, counselors, physicians, and public health workers. Having all lines of communication open leads to better availability of resources for the patient to ensure a safe pregnancy both mentally and physically.

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