



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Pre-birth Preventive Care

Perceived Need and Receipt of Services Among Women With Live Births — Oklahoma and South Carolina, 2004–2007

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

One of the best ways an expectant mother can care for her unborn child is to take care of herself. A recent CDC report found that there are gaps in the services women receive during pregnancy.

Mary Elizabeth O'Neil is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss ways to have a healthy pregnancy. Welcome to the show, Mary Elizabeth.

[Ms. O'Neil] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are pregnant women getting the services they need?

[Ms. O'Neil] We found that for some services, women are getting the help that they need. For example, women who identified that they needed help with or information about breastfeeding, they often did receive that help. Other services where they received help included parenting and childbirth classes, and nutrition services, such as WIC which is a supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children.

For other services, there were gaps in care. For some services, such as smoking cessation, helping to reduce violence in the home, and counseling for a family or personal problem, there were gaps in whether women who said they needed the help, if they got that help.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, for those services that pregnant women *aren't* getting, what can they do?

[Ms. O'Neil] Pregnancy is often a time when women start thinking about starting new healthy behaviors or how they can make their environment more healthy. If a woman has any questions about how to have a healthy pregnancy or a healthy baby, she should talk with her healthcare provider. Health care providers have guidance from professional organizations, such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, that give recommendations about the types of services women can receive. A healthcare provider can give you the help you need or they can link you to the resources to get you that help.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some health behaviors that help a woman have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby?

[Ms. O'Neil] There are many health behaviors. Let me highlight a few. A woman should eat nutritious foods, stop drinking alcohol, take a folic acid supplement, stop smoking cigarettes, and get needed immunizations, such as the flu shot. If a woman needs information on how to have a healthy pregnancy, she can go to the CDC's website: www.cdc.gov/pregnancy.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, what effects do some of these behaviors have on a pregnancy or a baby?

[Ms. O'Neil] I can give you three examples. We know that taking 400 micrograms of folic acid every day, before and during pregnancy, is important because folic acid can prevent birth defects of the baby's spine and brain.

Another example is smoking cessation. Smoking during pregnancy can cause premature birth and low birth weight, *and* smoking puts babies at risk for sudden infant death syndrome. Even being around someone else's cigarette smoke puts a baby and the mother at risk for health problems.

A third example is a flu shot. Getting a flu shot is the single best way to protect against getting the flu. A woman who gets the flu during pregnancy has a greater chance for health problems. And when a woman gets the flu shot, she's protecting herself *AND* her baby. Research has shown that babies who are born to mothers who got the flu shot during pregnancy were less likely to get sick with the flu than babies born to mothers who didn't get the flu shot. This is a great example of how a health behavior can protect both the mother *and* the baby.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information on how to have a healthy pregnancy?

[Ms. O'Neil] A great resource is the National Women's Health Resource Center. The site is www.womenshealth.gov/pregnancy.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Mary Elizabeth. I've been talking today with CDC's Mary Elizabeth O'Neil about ways to have a healthy pregnancy.

Remember, counseling, support services, screening, and treatment are important ways to improve the chances you'll give birth to a healthy baby. If you have questions or need help during pregnancy, it's important for you to talk to your healthcare provider.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.