

Prenatal Care

Women who receive comprehensive prenatal care beginning in the first trimester of their pregnancy tend to have bigger, healthier babies. Simply put, timely prenatal care can provide women with valuable information and support that contributes to a healthy baby.

Why It Matters

Prenatal care is an important preventive measure that can save lives and reduce health care costs.¹

During prenatal care visits, mothers receive guidance about diet, nutrition, exercise and lifestyle choices as well as medical monitoring that can identify potential problems with the fetus and other issues.

Regular check-ups are especially important

in identifying risk factors for preterm births, which account for approximately 35 percent of all health care spending on infants in the United States and are the leading cause of newborn death and disability.² Babies born to mothers who did not receive prenatal care are three times more likely to have low birth weights and five times more likely to die than babies whose mothers received prenatal care.³

Defining the Indicator

The percentage of women who begin prenatal care after their first trimester as well as pregnant women who receive no prenatal care.

In Colorado

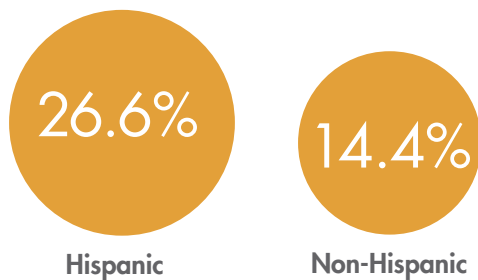
Colorado saw small improvements in prenatal care in 2009 and 2010, but the state struggles to increase the percentage of women receiving care. Nationally, Colorado ranked 27th on this indicator, according to the latest data available. This means that 17.8 percent of women who had children in 2010 initiated prenatal care

late in their pregnancies or not at all. In Massachusetts, which has the best rate, only 7.3 percent of women did not receive timely prenatal care.

Different rates of prenatal care are evident among Hispanic and non-Hispanic women in Colorado. About one of four Hispanic women (26.6 percent) did not receive timely prenatal care compared with 14.4 percent of non-Hispanic women. Factors such as lower incomes, lack of reliable transportation and language barriers may contribute to this disparity.⁴

Among the women who report not getting prenatal care as early as they wanted, more than 40 percent cited lack of money or no health insurance.⁵

Women Who Received Late or No Prenatal Care by Race/Ethnicity in Colorado



Late/No Prenatal Care

Percentage of pregnant women in Colorado who began prenatal care late did not receive prenatal care:

17.8%

Colorado Rank

27/50

Best State

Massachusetts

Massachusetts Late/No Prenatal

7.3%

Data from 2010

What if We Were No. 1?

If Colorado were ranked first instead of 27th



7,000

More babies would be born to mothers who received timely prenatal care during their pregnancy.

Promising Practices

Efforts to increase the number of women accessing timely prenatal care are ongoing. Strategies include policies that increase health insurance coverage and community-level programs that offer both education and services.

Massachusetts, the first state to expand health insurance coverage to all of its residents, ranks first in prenatal care. Use of prenatal care will likely grow nationwide under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which includes the service in the essential health benefits package.

Colorado is taking full advantage of benefits under the ACA by expanding Medicaid to all low-income women. Still, some women who are eligible for public health insurance or insurance tax credits are not enrolled. Effective and targeted enrollment will help ensure that more women will enroll in coverage and receive timely and comprehensive prenatal care.

One program aimed at improving the quality of prenatal care, CenteringPregnancy, offers a more relationship-centered approach than traditional prenatal services. Education and facilitated discussions in a group setting are followed by individual visits with a clinician. A 2009 study suggests participants in CenteringPregnancy had significantly more prenatal care visits, gained more weight during pregnancy, were more likely to breastfeed, and reported greater satisfaction with their care than women in traditional prenatal care.⁶



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Making a Difference

Hilltop Community Resources

Hilltop Community Resources in Grand Junction offers pregnant women prenatal coverage through its B4 Babies and Beyond program, which serves almost half of all pregnant women in Mesa County. The program provides women with application assistance and eligibility screening for Medicaid and Child Health Plan *Plus* (CHP+). Eligible applicants are issued a temporary insurance card, which covers pregnancy-related expenses and one year of coverage for their baby. Additionally, the program helps women find a physician, set up prenatal care appointments and learn about healthy lifestyles and community resources. All services are free and available in both English and Spanish. By improving access to prenatal care, Hilltop Community Resources is giving babies a head start for a bright future.

www.htop.org/child/b4b/phc
www.ColoradoHealth.org/hilltop

¹ The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, "Prenatal Care is Important to Healthy Pregnancies" (February 2012).

² Russell, R. B., et al. "Cost of Hospitalization for Preterm and Low Birth Weight Infants in the United States." *Pediatrics* 120.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Women's Health, "Prenatal Care Fact Sheet" (July 2012).

⁴ Shaffer, Cynthia F., "Factors Influencing the Access to Prenatal Care by Hispanic Pregnant Women," *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners* 14, no.2 (May 2005):93-96.

⁵ Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment, Health Statistics Section, "Colorado PRAMS Prevalence Estimates, 2010."

⁶ Carrie Kilma et al. "Introduction of CenteringPregnancy in a Public Health Clinic," *Journal of Midwifery and Maternal Health* 54, no. 1 (January/February 2009): 27-34.



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