

Treatment for cigarette, alcohol and drug use in pregnancy improves outcomes for mom and baby

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Pregnant women who receive treatment for substance abuse early in their pregnancy can achieve the same health outcomes as pregnant women with no substance abuse, according to a Kaiser Permanente study published online in the *Journal of Perinatology*.

The study, which is the largest to date, examined 49,985 women in Kaiser Permanente's prenatal care program and found that integrating substance abuse screening and treatment into routine prenatal care helped pregnant women achieve similar health outcomes as women who were not using cigarettes, alcohol or other drugs. This is also the largest study to examine multiple substances: cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, methamphetamines, cocaine and heroin.

"This program can happen everywhere and should become the gold standard for women who are pregnant and using cigarettes, alcohol or other drugs," said study lead author Nancy C. Goler, M.D., an OB/GYN and Kaiser Permanente regional medical director of the Early Start Program for the organization's Northern California operations. "The study's big finding was that study participants treated in the Early Start program had outcomes similar to our control group, women who had no evidence of substance abuse."

The study compared 2,073 pregnant women who were screened, assessed and received ongoing intervention during pregnancy through the Early

Start program at 21 Kaiser Permanente Northern California outpatient obstetric clinics from 1999 to 2003 to women in three other groups: 156 women who were screened but did not accept assessment or treatment; 1,203 women were screened, assessed and received brief intervention only; and a control group of 46,553 women who showed no evidence of substance abuse.

The study found the risk of stillborn, placental abruption (when the placental lining separates from the mother's uterus), pre-term delivery, low birth weight and neonatal ventilation were dramatically higher for the 156 untreated substance abusers than the 2,073 women in the Early Start program:

-- Risk of stillbirth was 16.2 times higher for women who were screened but did not accept assessment or treatment than those who received Early Start treatment

-- Risk of placental abruption was 6.8 times higher for women who were screened but did not accept assessment or treatment than those who received treatment

Risk of pre-term delivery was 2.1 times higher for women who were screened but did not accept assessment or treatment than those who received treatment

Low birth weight (under 5.5 pounds) was 1.8 times higher for women who were screened but did not accept assessment or treatment than those who received treatment

Neonatal ventilation was 2.2 times higher for women who were screened but did not accept assessment or treatment than those who received treatment.

Women who went through the Early Start program had the same statistical risks of stillborn, placental abruption as the control group of women who did not use any cigarettes, during their pregnancy.

here to women who are currently smoking, drinking or using other drugs, or who
op, is that it is not too late to seek help when you find out you are pregnant," said Dr.
r women ask for help, the better the health outcomes will be for themselves, and
message to all pregnant women, as well as women who are trying to conceive, is to
garette and drug use."

Kaiser Permanente's Early Start program integrates obstetric care with substance
r pregnant women in three ways: all women are screened by questionnaire for drug,
ol use, and by urine toxicology testing with signed consent; a licensed substance
s in the OB/GYN department and sees the patients at the same time as their prenatal
; and all providers and patients are educated about the effects of drugs, alcohol and
g pregnancy.

ch is in place in 40 Kaiser Permanente outpatient obstetric clinics in Northern
ng rolled out in other Kaiser Permanente facilities nationwide, screens nearly 40,000
By providing a licensed professional with expertise in substance abuse and pregnancy
partment – so women have barrier-free access to care in a safe, supportive
ly Start exceeds the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
ics Opinion recommendations to use universal screening questions, brief
eferral to treatment programs for substance abuse

perb example of how effective the Kaiser Permanente's Early Start approach and
treating chemical dependency and substance abuse in pregnant women," said
Executive Director of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, District
Early Start exceeds the guidelines set forth by ACOG and is a fantastic example of a
e incorporated in a variety of settings to reach this very important group of women."

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