CDC: Repeat births among teens remains high

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CDC: Repeat births among teens remains high

by Patrick M. O’Connell • Digital Content Editor

While the number of teenagers giving birth in the United States has fallen in recent years, the number of mothers who have a second baby in their teens remains high.

In 2010, 18.3 percent of babies born to teenagers were repeat births, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) National Vital Statistics System. A repeat teen birth is a second (or more) pregnancy resulting in a live birth before the age of 20.

The results of the study were announced Tuesday in a special article in a Vital Signs report in the CDC’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) (www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm62e0402a1.htm?s_cid=mm62e0402a1_e).

Repeat teen births were highest among American Indian/Alaska Natives (21.6 percent), Hispanics (20.9 percent) and non-Hispanic blacks (20.4 percent). The rate was lowest among whites (14.8 percent). There were also geographic disparities, with repeat teen births the highest in the South and lowest in New England. Repeat teen births ranged from 22 percent in Texas to 10 percent in New Hampshire.

Repeat teen births decreased 6.2 percent from 2007 to 2010, from 19.5 percent to 18.3 percent, but the CDC is concerned the rate remains high.

“Teen birth rates in the United States have declined to a record low, which is good news,” CDC Director Tom Frieden, M.D., M.P.H. said in a statement. “But rates are still far too high. Repeat births can negatively impact the mother’s education and job opportunities as well as the health of the next generation.”

Rates of preterm and low birth weight babies also are higher among mothers who have had more than one child in their teens.

The CDC urges clinicians to support teens during and after pregnancy in an effort to form a broad base of support and link them to educational, economic and social resources. Efforts should also be made to counsel teens about abstinence and contraception, including promoting condom use to prevent pregnancy. Additionally, teens should be offered postpartum contraception options.

In 2010, among the 364,859 births to teens 15-19 years old, 66,761 were repeat births. The majority of repeat births, 85.7 percent, were a second child, but 12.6 percent were a third child and 1.7 percent a fourth to sixth child, according to the CDC.

Nearly 91 percent of teen mothers who were sexually active used some form of contraception in the postpartum period, but only 22 percent used contraceptives considered to be “most effective” (where the risk is less than one pregnancy per 100 users in a year), according to CDC statistics. And nearly 9 percent of sexually active teen mothers reported not using any contraceptive. Their reasons included “not wanting to use birth control” (36 percent), objections by the husband/partner (22 percent) and ability to pay (20 percent). Eight percent of teen mothers reported not having sex to prevent getting pregnant again.

A 2012 AAP clinical report, Care of Adolescent Parents and their Children (http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/130/6/e1743.full), offers clinicians a wide variety of techniques for helping teenage mothers, including initiating contraceptive counseling during pregnancy and stressing the importance of finishing high school.

More information is available through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Adolescent Health’s Pregnancy Assistance Fund Resource and Training Center at www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/paf and through the CDC at www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy.
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