



Pre-Pregnancy Overweight and Obesity Among Florida Women, 2000-2001

Overweight and obesity contribute to a number of serious health consequences including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, and certain cancers. According to the American Dietetic Association, women should establish a lifestyle for optimal health that reduces the chance of adverse pregnancy outcomes before becoming pregnant.

Weight alone does not always provide a sensitive measure of body size and proportionality. Body Mass Index (BMI) offers a better measure of weight-to-height status. BMI is defined as weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared, or as weight in pounds divided by height in inches squared multiplied by 703. Overweight is defined as a BMI between 25.0 and 30.0. Obesity is defined as a BMI 30.0 or more.

According to Florida PRAMS 2000 and 2001 survey data, 33.1 percent of new mothers in Florida were either overweight or obese before becoming pregnant. Among these, 58.6 percent were overweight, and 41.4 percent were obese.

The prevalence of hypertension during pregnancy among overweight or obese women (25.5 percent) was higher than among women who were not overweight or obese (13.1 percent). One in ten (10.8 percent) overweight or obese women suffered with gestational diabetes, in contrast to 5.8 percent among their non-overweight/non-obese counterparts. The prevalence of cesarean delivery among women who were either overweight or obese (30.9 percent) was higher than among women who were not overweight or obese (23.0 percent).

The prevalence of pre-pregnancy overweight or obesity among women in Florida was:

- The highest among non-Hispanic Black women (42.9 percent); 31.9 percent among non-Hispanic White women, and 28.0 percent among Hispanic women.
- The highest among women age 35 and older (40.6 percent), followed by women age 25 to 34 (35.0 percent), next by women age 20 to 24 (29.7 percent), and last by women age 19 and younger (24.2 percent).
- Similar among all levels of education. In particular, 31.7 percent among women with less than a high school education, 34.3 percent among those with a high school education, and 32.9 percent among women with more than a high school education.
- Higher among women with household incomes of \$39,600 or less (36.6 percent) than among women with incomes of \$39,601 or more (28.7 percent).
- Almost identical among Medicaid recipients (33.0 percent) and non-Medicaid recipients (33.3 percent).
- Similar among married women (34.0 percent) and unmarried women (31.7 percent).

This study shows that one-third of women were overweight or obese before pregnancy, and that pre-pregnancy overweight or obesity is more likely to occur among women who are non-Hispanic Blacks, are age 25 and older, and/or have household incomes of \$39,600 or less. The data underscore the association between pre-pregnancy overweight or obesity and hypertension during pregnancy and gestational diabetes. This study also shows a relationship between pre-pregnancy overweight or obesity and cesarean delivery. These findings may assist healthcare providers and program planners in Florida to provide effective information for women regarding the importance of attaining and maintaining a healthy pre-pregnancy weight to prevent adverse maternal health conditions, such as hypertension and gestational diabetes.

The Florida Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) is a random survey of recent mothers of live-born infants. It is designed to monitor the physical, economic, and social health of Florida mothers and newborns. PRAMS data are "weighted" so that the resulting estimates can be generalized to the entire state population. PRAMS data from 2000 and 2001 were combined to increase sample size and precision of estimates for this study.

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For more information about Florida PRAMS, please contact Helen Marshall, PRAMS Coordinator, at (850) 245-4444, extension 2415, or by e-mail at: Helen_Marshall@doh.state.fl.us; or Curt Miller, Epidemiologist, extension 2407, or by e-mail at: Curt_Miller@doh.state.fl.us; or visit the department's web site at: http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/epi/prams/prams.htm.