

## Patterns of Postpartum Birth Control Use after an Unintended Pregnancy

Approximately half of all births in the U.S. are the result of an unintended pregnancy.<sup>1</sup> Reducing the number of pregnancies that are either unwanted or mistimed is important since unintended pregnancies are linked to poor birth outcomes, a higher rate of preterm delivery, and the risk for subsequent unintended pregnancies.

One way to prevent additional unintended pregnancies is through the postpartum use of effective birth control (BC) methods. The use of effective BC methods after a birth can also help ensure adequate birth spacing. Effective postpartum BC is, therefore, an essential component of a healthy reproductive life plan.

For this Brief, Oklahoma Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) 2012 data were used to look at rates of unintended pregnancies within Oklahoma and the subsequent use of effective birth control methods following a birth.

In 2012, 36.3% of Oklahoma mothers had an unintended pregnancy (Figure 1). Of these

mothers, less than half (47%) used BC at the time of conception.

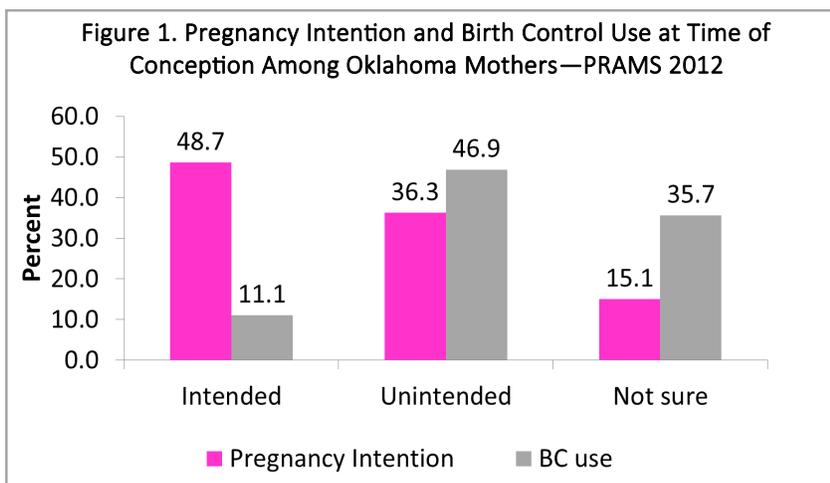
However, after giving birth, 83.6% of the mothers who reported an unintended pregnancy were using birth control. Other findings from the PRAMS 2012 data include:

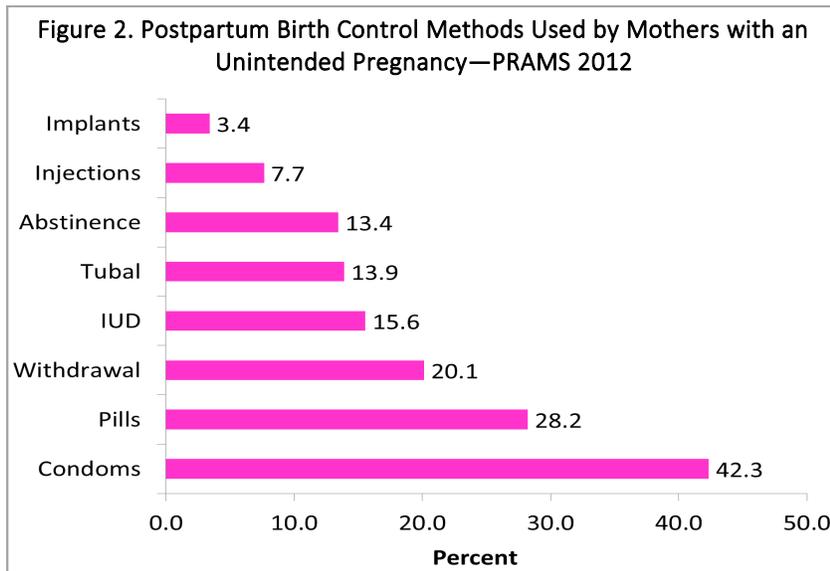
- Condoms, pills, and withdrawal were the top three birth control methods used by mothers postpartum (Figure 2).
- Very few mothers (n<30) reported using vasectomy, patches, and rhythm BC methods.
- Abstinence was reported as the most common reason for not using BC postpartum.
- African American mothers and mothers with less than a high school education had the lowest rate of postpartum BC use after an unintended pregnancy.

Over 21% of mothers with an unintended pregnancy did not use BC before and after pregnancy (data not shown).

### OKLAHOMA FACTS

- In 2012, 36.3% of mothers had an unintended pregnancy.
- Of the mothers who had an unintended pregnancy in 2012, less than half (47%) used birth control at the time of conception.
- Condoms (42.3%), pills (28.2%), and withdrawal (20.1%) were the top three birth control methods used by mothers following a birth.
- Over 21% of mothers with an unintended pregnancy did not use birth control before and after a pregnancy.
- Mothers with Medicaid who had an unintended pregnancy were less likely to use birth control before pregnancy but more likely to use birth control after a birth than non-Medicaid mothers.
- Mothers with Medicaid used LARCs (Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives) at a higher rate than non-Medicaid mothers.





### Mothers with Medicaid

In Oklahoma, more than half of all births are paid for using Medicaid.<sup>2</sup> According to the PRAMS 2012 data, mothers with Medicaid who had an unintended pregnancy:

- Were less likely to use birth control before pregnancy than non-Medicaid mothers.
- Had a slightly higher rate of birth control use after a birth (but not statistically significant).
- Used Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARCs) at a higher rate than non-Medicaid mothers (Figure 3).

### Implications

The findings indicate that more education and awareness about appropriate and effective birth control and its use are needed across the state.

Nearly 10% of mothers using birth control postpartum were using less effective methods, such as withdrawal, instead of more reliable methods, like birth control pills or LARCs.

Public health programs should ensure that their messages and intervention services discuss the use of effective contraceptive methods to reduce unplanned pregnancies, including during the postpartum period.

*“I got pregnant with my new baby when my second child was only six months old. She was a surprise, as we were using the withdrawal method of birth control.”*

- PRAMS Mom

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

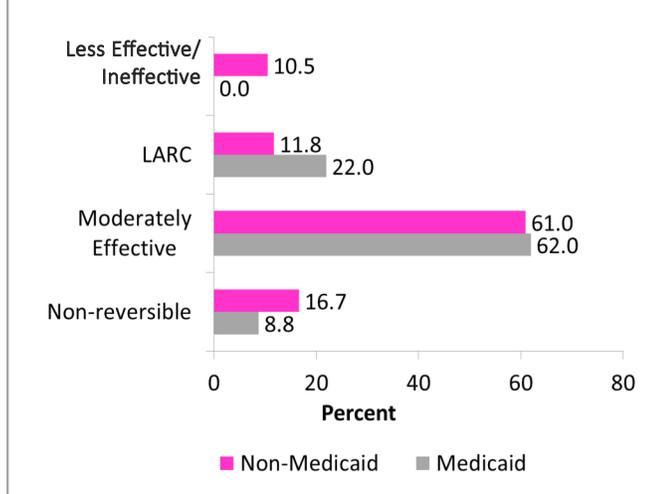
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PRAMS is a population-based surveillance system about maternal behaviors and experiences before, during, and after pregnancy. Approximately 250 mothers are selected to participate in Oklahoma each month. Mothers are sent as many as three mail questionnaires seeking their participation with follow-up phone interviews for non-respondents. Information included in the birth registry is used to develop analysis weights that adjust for probability of selection and non-response. Prevalence rates were calculated and the potential risk factors were identified using the Cochran-Mantel-Haenszel Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) Test. PRAMS had 1,844 respondents for 2012 for a response rate of 65.0%.

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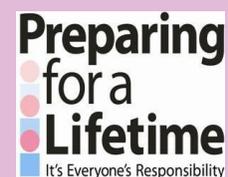
**Figure 3. Type of Postpartum Birth Control Methods by Mother’s Medicaid Status—PRAMS 2012**



Furthermore, programs should seek to improve women’s access to LARCs to lower rates of unintended pregnancies and improve health

### References:

1. Healthy People 2020. Accessed 11/17/2015. Available at [www.healthypeople.gov](http://www.healthypeople.gov)
2. Vital Statistics 2012. Accessed 11/17/2015. Available at [www.health.ok.gov/ok2share](http://www.health.ok.gov/ok2share)



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