

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Dependent Adolescent Pregnancy Rates and Risk Factors for Pregnancy in the Military Health Care System

Burr, J. E., Roberts, T. A., & Bucci, J. R. (2013). Dependent adolescent pregnancy rates and risk factors for pregnancy in the military health care system.. *Military Medicine*, 178(4), 412-415. doi:10.7205/milmed-d-12-00461

SUMMARY: Adolescent pregnancy is related to negative outcomes for adolescents (e.g., school drop-out, poverty) and is financially costly for society. This study examined the incidence of and risk factors for pregnancy among female military dependents in San Antonio, Texas. Findings suggested that incidence rates among military-insured female dependents are lower than overall United States incidence rates, and age and previous contraceptive prescription were associated with increased risk for adolescent pregnancy.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The incidence of adolescent pregnancy among military-insured dependents was 9.67 pregnancies per 1,000 adolescents each year, lower than overall United States incidence rates.
- Dependents prescribed contraceptives and those ages 15-19 years, compared to those ages 12-14 or 20-23 years, were at greater risk for unmarried adolescent pregnancy.
- Of the 444 pregnancies in the exploratory analyses, 59% of the military dependents were eligible but not enrolled in military insurance or enrolled only briefly at the time of pregnancy diagnosis.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Educate military dependents on reproductive health and prevention of adolescent pregnancy
- Disseminate information encouraging military parents to enroll their dependents in insurance benefits
- Provide information about support programs and medical services available for pregnant adolescent military dependents

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs that prevent adolescent pregnancy among military dependents by providing education and information about resources
- Recommend integrating parent education regarding insurance, especially insurance for dependents, into existing programs for military parents
- Encourage the training of professionals who work with adolescent military dependents to discuss sensitive topics regarding pregnancy prevention and resources for adolescent pregnancy

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METHODS

- Retrospective data of all female military-insured dependents, ages 12-23 years, in San Antonio, Texas from 2006 to 2010 were included.
- Data regarding age, insurance status at time of pregnancy diagnosis, and prescription of contraceptives were collected via insurance, laboratory, and pharmacy records.
- Incidence rates and related risk factors for military adolescent pregnancies were examined.

PARTICIPANTS

- The sample included 12,417 unmarried female military dependents with an average age of 15.9 years (SD = 2.9) who were enrolled in military insurance.
- No data regarding participants' race/ethnicity were provided.
- Separate exploratory analyses of female military dependents not enrolled in military insurance or enrolled less than nine months were also conducted.
- A minority of participants were prescribed contraceptives, including oral contraceptive pills (17%), vaginal rings (1%), and implants or previous emergency contraceptives (> 1 %).

LIMITATIONS

- Only dependents enrolled in military insurance were included, so results may not generalize to military dependents who receive non-military insurance benefits.
- Exploratory analyses of military dependents who were not insured or insured less than nine months were unclearly reported, including no report of sample size.
- Texas has one of the highest adolescent pregnancy rates in the United States, and results from this sample may not generalize to adolescents in other geographical locations.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine the effects of reproductive health education on military dependents' pregnancy rates using a randomized controlled research design
- Investigate factors (e.g., cost, coverage) affecting insurance enrollment of military dependents
- Compare differences between military and civilian adolescents in rates of pregnancy and risks for adolescent pregnancy

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