

Women unaware of specialist phone services in late pregnancy

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Researchers in England have found women are accessing advice via out-of-hours services when they could be accessing maternity services directly. Also, the out of hours service receives many inquiries from women in the first trimester reflecting a lack of specific maternity services in early pregnancy .

Women in the later stages of pregnancy are accessing [advice](#) via out-of-hours services when they could be accessing maternity services directly, a study has concluded.

Researchers at Bradford University, together with healthcare professionals at Shropshire Doctors Co-operative in Shrewsbury, analysed 2,022 telephone pregnancy-related consultations made between January and December 2011 to an out-of-hours (OOH) primary care service provider. The OOH provides care across an area of England and the Welsh borders, covering about 600,000 patients in two counties.

The large number of consultations reflected the lack of availability of specific maternity services early in pregnancy, the study found.

However, it also found that some women with conditions related to pregnancy accessed the OOH service later in pregnancy when they should have had 24-hour access to maternity service consultation.

The study found that although many of the calls in later pregnancy were related to general health issues, a substantial number of women called

the service with pregnancy-related concerns, including abdominal pain and bleeding.

'By this point, these women should have been "booked" in for [maternity care](#) and informed about midwifery telephone consultation services available in their areas.'

The article suggests [women](#) need to be better informed about the availability of 24-hour maternity service advice and support.

The study, published in the March issue of Primary Health Care journal, is the first to describe the nature of calls made to an OOH service relating to [pregnancy](#). It also compared and contrasted the differences between how the calls were handled by GPs and nurse practitioners (NPs).

GPs were more likely to provide advice only, while NPs were more likely to recommend a base visit.

More information: Haith-Cooper M, Stacey T, Edwards E, Clements G, Mohammed M (2015) "Pregnancy-related telephone consultations to an out-of-hours provider: a retrospective study." *Primary Health Care*. 25, 2, 24-29. journals.rcni.com/doi/abs/10.7748/phc.25.2.24.e936

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