

Steep rise in births to U.S. women using opioids

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(HealthDay)—Over a decade, there was a nearly fivefold increase in the

number of babies born each year to American women who have used opioids, a federal government report says.

There was also a dramatic rise in the number of infants born with a dependency on [opioids](#), the report found. These drugs include heroin and prescription painkillers such as fentanyl, oxycodone (OxyContin) and hydrocodone/acetaminophen (Vicodin).

"It is critical that [pregnant women](#) of all ages have access to prevention, treatment and recovery services that meet their specialized needs," said Kana Enomoto, from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

"Programs that provide pregnant women with access to opioid use disorder treatment and reproductive [health services](#) can help ensure that these future mothers and their children live healthier, happier, and more productive lives," Enomoto said in an agency news release. SAMHSA prepared the report for U.S. Congress.

Overall, women of childbearing age who were pregnant were less likely to have used an opioid recently (1 percent) compared to non-pregnant women (3 percent), the SAMHSA study found.

Still, even that one percent figure translates to an average of about 21,000 pregnant women using opioids for "non-medical reasons" in the past month, the report's authors said.

Age was a major factor in opioid use during pregnancy. Younger women are significantly more likely to use opioids for non-medical reasons during pregnancy. Those 15-17 had the highest use (2.8 percent), while women between 18 and 25 had the next highest rates (1.5 percent).

In contrast, among pregnant women over 25, only 0.5 percent had used

opioids for a non-medical reason in the past month, the report said.

Of the more than 21,000 women who were pregnant when admitted for [substance abuse treatment](#) in 2012, 23 percent reported heroin use, while 28 percent reported using a non-heroin opioid.

Special treatment programs for pregnant/postpartum women aren't always easy to find, the study found. In fact, according to SAMHSA, just 13 percent of outpatient-only [substance abuse](#) treatment facilities offer programs for pregnant and postpartum [women](#). And 13 percent of residential treatment facilities have such programs, according to 2012 SAMHSA data.

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse has more on [opioids](#).

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