

Teen pregnancy, sexual health care use lower than expected during pandemic

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, population-level rates of adolescent pregnancy and sexual health-related care utilization were lower than expected, according to a study published online Feb. 2 in *Pediatrics*.

Ashley Vandermorris, M.D., from The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, and colleagues conducted a population-based, repeated cross-sectional study of >630,000 [female adolescents](#) (ages 12 to 19 years) during the pre-pandemic (Jan. 1, 2018, to Feb. 29, 2020) and COVID-19 pandemic (March 1, 2020, to Dec. 31, 2022) periods to examine [pregnancy](#) and sexual health-related care utilization.

The researchers found that population-level rates of adolescent pregnancy and encounters for contraceptive and sexually transmitted infection (STI) management were lower than expected during the pandemic (rate ratios, 0.87, 0.82, and 0.52, respectively). Despite health system reopening, by the end of the study period, encounter rates did not return to prepandemic rates. During the pandemic, the least change was seen in pregnancy rates among adolescent subpopulations, with the highest prepandemic pregnancy rates.

"Although the findings of decreased access to sexual health-related services, such as [contraception](#) and STI management, are consistent with the anticipated consequences of pandemic-related restrictions, the potential implications of the pandemic for adolescent pregnancy were more difficult to predict," the authors write.

More information: Study: Ashley Vandermorris et al, Sexual and Reproductive Health Outcomes Among Adolescent Females During the COVID-19 Pandemic, *Pediatrics* (2024). [DOI: 10.1542/peds.2023-063889](#)

Editorial: Laura K. Grubb, Sexual and Reproductive Health During the Pandemic: Vulnerable Populations Are Hit the Hardest, *Pediatrics* (2024). [DOI: 10.1542/peds.2023-064523](#)

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