

# PRAMS Prints

No. 3

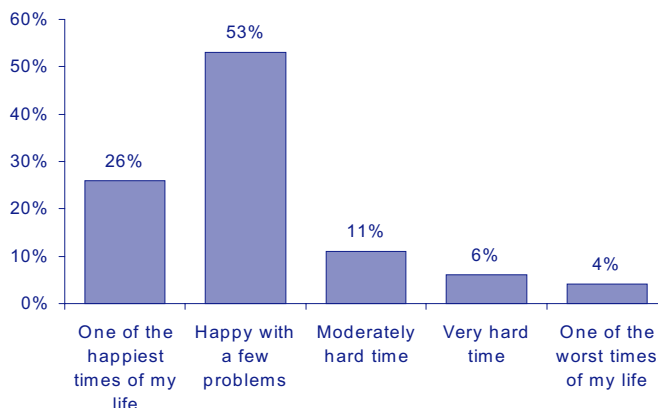
August 1999

The Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) is an ongoing mail/telephone survey of women who have recently given birth. The survey collects information to improve the health of mothers and babies in North Carolina. The data presented in this newsletter was collected 3 to 5 months after delivery from a sample of 852 women who had a live birth in the last six months of 1997. The data is weighted to be representative of all North Carolina births during that time.

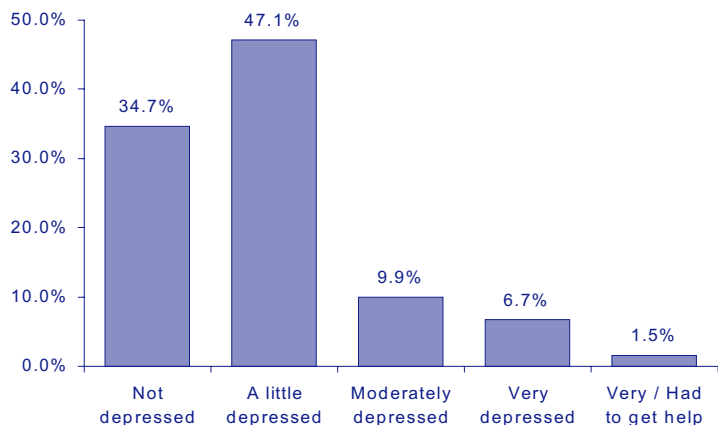
## Feelings During Pregnancy

Pregnancy is a time filled with many emotions. As one PRAMS participant says, *“Different pregnancies differ... it is a very emotional experience.”* Happiness, fear, worry, anxiety, joy, apprehension are just a few of the emotions that PRAMS Moms comment about. We ask, “How would you describe the time during your pregnancy?” The responses to the five categories are shown in the graph to the right. For the majority of women, it is a happy time even if they have a few problems.

Reported Emotional State During Pregnancy



Reported Postpartum Depression



There is also a question on the PRAMS survey about postpartum depression. Women were asked to choose a category that best describes how they have felt in the months after their most recent delivery. Only 35 percent of women reported that they were not depressed at all in the few months after giving birth. About 8 percent reported that they were very depressed, with only a small percentage (1.5%) getting help for the depression.



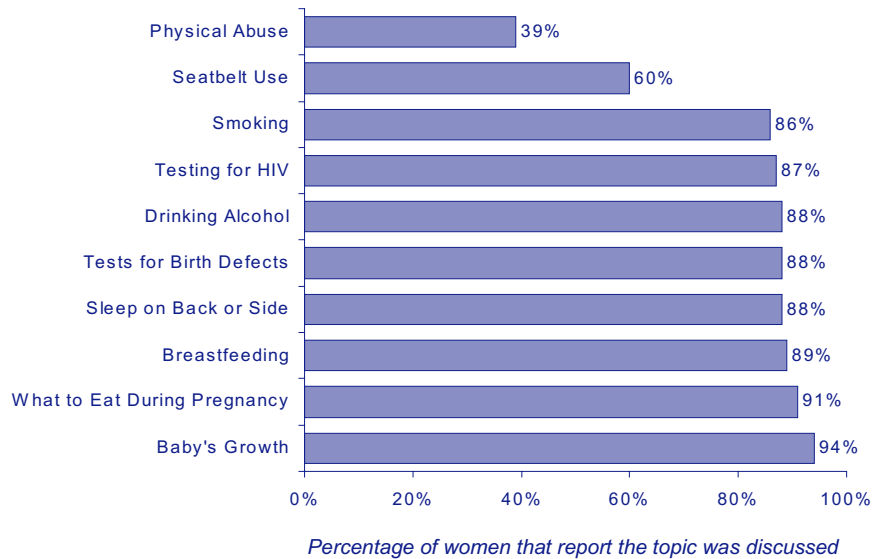
## Content of Prenatal Care

Early initiation of prenatal care is an important factor in pregnancy outcomes. But often little is known about the content of that care.

According to the PRAMS survey, North Carolina health care workers are giving pregnant woman a lot of information during their visits. One woman comments, “The doctors didn’t really talk to me about problems unless I asked them, but the book they gave me answered everything.” This indicates that although there may not have been direct patient education, resources were provided to women.

The percentages of women who report that a health care worker talked with them about specific topics are generally high, as seen in the graph. However, some women still feel that they are not able to get the information they need. Another PRAMS Mom wrote, “I think the nurses need to talk to patients more about diseases and how they affect the unborn child, and anything else that could hurt the baby.”

### Topics Discussed During Prenatal Care Visits

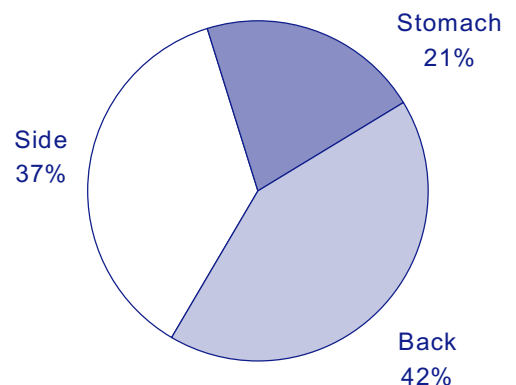


## Sleep Position

One factor identified to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is sleep position. Studies have shown that babies have an increased risk of SIDS when they are placed to sleep on the stomach. The American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force recommends that healthy infants be put to sleep on their back. Side sleeping is preferred over stomach but poses a risk of the infant rolling onto their stomach.

Women were asked how they put their new baby down to sleep *most of the time*. Only 42 percent of mothers reported putting their baby to sleep on his or her back. There are still 21 percent placing babies to sleep on their stomachs. Efforts are being made by the “Back to Sleep” campaign to continue the reduction of stomach sleeping. For more information or free educational materials, please contact the North Carolina Healthy Start Foundation at (919) 828-1819. The NC Family Health Resource Line (1-800-FOR-BABY) provides information to the general public on ways to reduce the risk of SIDS.

### Baby Sleep Position



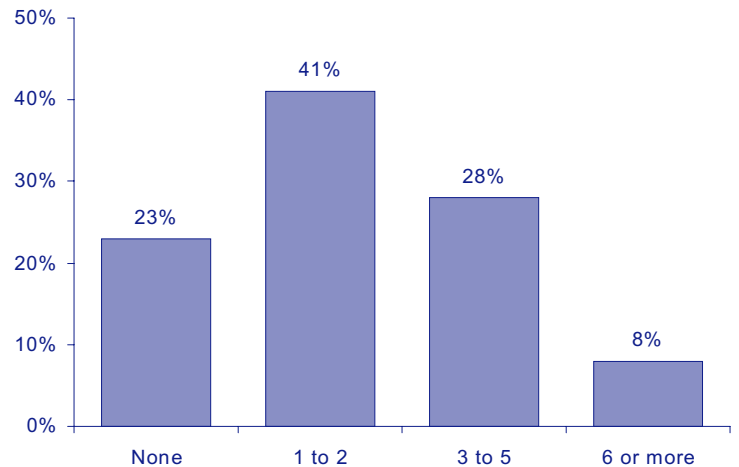
## Stressful Events in the 12 Months Before Delivery

The PRAMS survey is designed to collect information on many aspects of women's lives at the time surrounding their pregnancy. Stress is a factor that can affect both mental and physical health. The survey asks if specific events that are considered stressful have occurred in the 12 months before the delivery of their baby. These stressful events are listed below, followed by the percentage of women who experienced each event.

- Moved to a new address (39%)
- Argued with partner more than usual (32%)
- Someone close to you was very sick (28%)
- Had a lot of bills you couldn't pay (25%)
- Someone close to you died (22%)
- Close to someone with a bad alcohol or drug problem (16%)
- Partner said he didn't want you to be pregnant (14%)
- Separation or divorce from partner (12%)
- Partner lost job (10%)
- You lost your job (10%)
- Involved in a physical fight (7%)
- You or partner went to jail (7%)
- You were homeless (2%)

Seventy-seven percent of women reported one or more stressful events in the 12 months before delivery and 8 percent experienced 6 or more events. Only 23 percent of women reported that they had none of these stressful events in the 12 months before delivery.

### Number of Stressful Events Reported

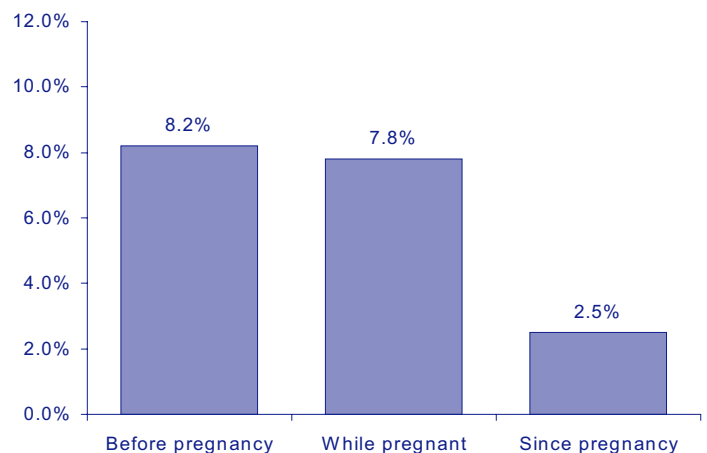


## Physical Abuse

The North Carolina PRAMS survey has questions about physical abuse before, during, and after pregnancy. The graph shows the percentage of women who report that someone physically abused them at the different times. The percentages of women abused 12 months before and during their pregnancy are almost the same. The reported abuse since the pregnancy is lower. This may be due in part to the fact that the time period is shorter, rather than a reduction in abuse. The women were interviewed 3 to 5 months after they gave birth, so it is less than half as long as the 12-month and 9-month time periods.

We also ask women who were physically abused while they were pregnant about the frequency of that abuse compared to before the pregnancy. Thirty-five percent of women who were abused during their pregnancy were not abused in the 12 months before they got pregnant. Twenty-one percent reported that they were abused less before they got pregnant. Twenty-six percent were abused more often and 18 percent were abused about the same amount during their pregnancy as before. Physical abuse of the mother poses a significant risk to their unborn child.

### Reported Physical Abuse



## Putting the PRAMS data to use

A central goal of the North Carolina PRAMS project is to disseminate the information collected by the survey. In the first half of 1999, this has included presentations to the Project ASSIST Women's Health Subcommittee, Baby Love Advisory Committee, Public Health Alliance Against Domestic Violence, and the 1999 SIDS Counselor Update for the Raleigh and Fayetteville regions.

If there is a group that you think would benefit from hearing more about PRAMS, please let us know.



## We have a Bookmark for you...

The State Center for Health Statistics is continually updating our web site. One recent addition is the new PRAMS pages located under the *Current Projects* section. New features include survey findings, in-depth information about our data collection, resources for new mothers, and links to related web sites.

<http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/>



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