



FAMILY PLANNING NEWSLETTER

In this newsletter for the Michigan Family Planning program we detail the importance of screening for sexually transmitted infections (STI) screening prior to conception at Title X clinics in Michigan.

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Preconception Health Risk Factor: STI & Pregnancy

Women can become pregnant while infected with an STI

Women can become infected while pregnant

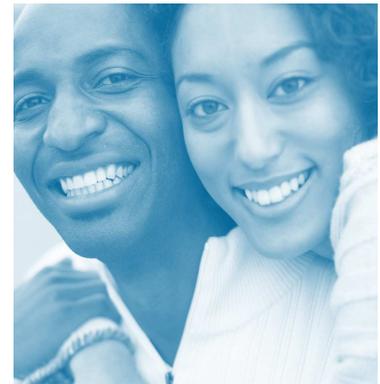
STIs during pregnancy can be passed to the baby before, during or after the baby's birth

Untreated STIs can lead to serious health problems for mother and baby such as:

- Premature rupture of fetal membranes & pre-term delivery
- Increased risk of low birthweight
- Stillbirth
- Eye infections (baby)
- Respiratory infections (baby)
- Uterine infection (mother)
- Systemic infections (mother & baby)^{7,9,11}

What is Preconception Health?

Preconception health is a woman's health *before* she becomes pregnant. It applies to women who have never been pregnant and to women who may become pregnant again. The goal of preconception health is to combine the best medical care, healthy behaviors, strong support, and safe environments at home and at work. Reducing physical, emotional, mental and oral health risk factors and improving maternal health is a public health priority. Poor birth outcomes and complications of mothers and infants can be avoided.¹



Why is it important?

By the time prenatal care begins, even if during the first trimester, it is often too late to prevent many unfavorable pregnancy outcomes. Certain problems are most likely to develop before a woman is aware of her pregnancy, and thus risks are not addressed in time. Examples of unfavorable outcomes are as follows:

- In 2008 8.5% of Michigan babies were born with low birthweight;²
- Nearly one-quarter (24.8%) of mothers giving birth in Michigan during 2008 had at least one medical risk factor;³
- And 2.5% of babies born to Michigan residents were infected with and/or were treated for gonorrhea (0.4%), syphilis (0.1%) or chlamydia (2.0%).⁴

One risk factor is sexually transmitted infections (STI), caused by infections that are transmitted through sexual contact. STI screening is a preconception health priority because of long term consequences if they are undiagnosed and untreated. Complications include infertility, chronic health problems and in some cases death. The harmful effects of STIs in babies may include: stillbirth (a baby that is born dead), low birth weight (less than five pounds), eye infections, pneumonia, infection in the baby's blood stream, neurologic damage, blindness, deafness, acute hepatitis, meningitis, chronic liver disease, and cirrhosis.⁵ In the mother STIs have been associated with ectopic pregnancy, infertility and pelvic pain. Therefore, screening for STIs is an important component of preconception health.

TITLE X FAMILY PLANNING STI SCREENING

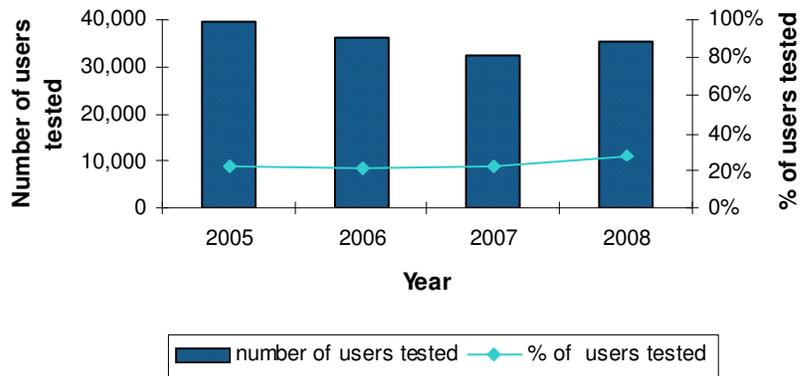
FAMILY PLANNING & PRECONCEPTION HEALTH

Women who plan their pregnancies are more likely to seek preconception health care and address health issues prior to pregnancy. Moreover, a family planning visit for contraceptive advice and methods provides an opportunity for preconception care counseling on ways to achieve a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.

One component of the preconception healthcare recommendations¹, STI screening, is provided at Title X Family Planning clinics. Program guidelines mandate Title X funded clinics to provide screening, education and referral for chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis and HIV infections. Further, one of the objectives of the Michigan Family Planning program is to assure access to a broad range of family planning services and related preventative health services including STI prevention, education, counseling and testing.⁶ Screening is relevant for Title X clinic users, as young, sexually active women have the highest rates of gonorrhea and chlamydia⁸ and are the target population for preconception health initiatives.

GONORRHEA SCREENING

Figure 1 Number and percentage of users who were screened for gonorrhea at MI Title X Family Planning Clinics, MI FPAR 2005-2008



Any sexually active person can become infected; however, the highest gonorrhea infection rates are found among sexually active teenagers, young adults and African-Americans.⁹ In Michigan, the highest reported rate (9.5 per 1,000) was among females ages 15-19 years, an 11% increase from 2000.¹⁰ Overall, the reported infection rate decreased by 10% from 1.83/1,000 in 2000 to 1.64/1,000 in 2008.

In 2008 Michigan Title X clinics screened 28% of users for gonorrhea 28% more compared to 22% in 2005 (Figure 1). Screening

rates among Michigan Title X Family planning clinic users varied by gender with 41% of men screened compared to 28% of women (1.5 times more).

Screening guidelines for STIs

High risk

- Age 15-24 years and more than one partner in last 12 months
- Age 15-24 years and new partner in last 12 months
- History of STI (within 12 months)
- Infected partner
- Symptomatic
- Pregnant

TITLE X FAMILY PLANNING STI SCREENING

CHLAMYDIA SCREENING

Annual screening for Chlamydia is recommended for all sexually active women younger than 25 years of age. An annual screening test also is recommended for older women with risk factors for chlamydia and pregnant women.¹¹ The incidence of chlamydia has steadily increased. In Michigan, the number of chlamydia cases increased 77% from 2000 to 2007; better reporting, improved testing and increased screening of targeted (female) populations may account for some of this increase.¹²

“Chlamydia and gonorrhea are the most important preventable causes of infertility. If left untreated, up to 40% of women with chlamydia or gonorrhea will develop pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID can lead to infertility and potentially fatal tubal (ectopic) pregnancy.”¹³

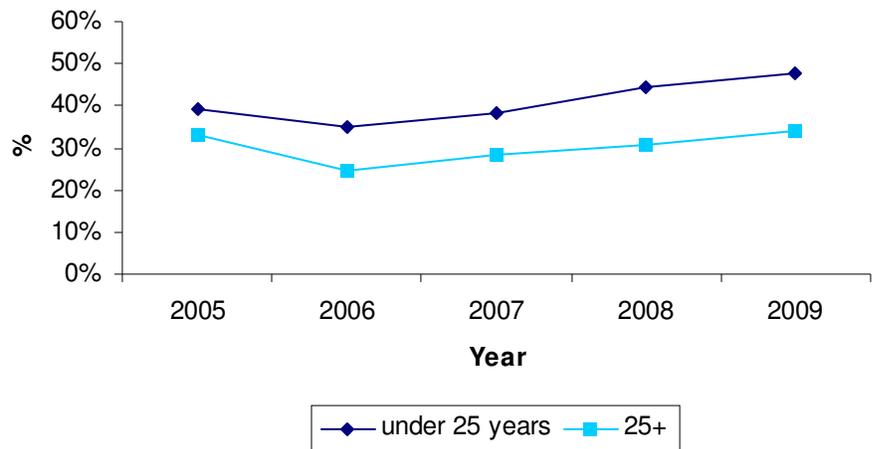
Chlamydia, like other bacterial STIs such as gonorrhea and syphilis, can be treated and cured with antibiotics. Timely treatment (within 14-30 days of screening) is important to reduce complications, transmission and to increase effective treatment of partners. If patients are unable to directly notify their partner a web portal (www.inspot.org) can be used to send an anonymous message to partners advising them to be checked.

In 2008, Title X funded clinics in Michigan tested nearly 40% of female users and 45% of female users younger than 25 years for Chlamydia. The highest screening rate (46%) among female users was among the 15-17 year old and 18-19 year old age groups. The proportion of women younger than 25 years of age who were tested for chlamydia increased 13.6% from 39.3% in 2005 to 44.6% in 2008 (Figure 2).

The screening rate among male users of all ages was 46% and for younger than 25 years it was 53%. The highest screening rate (66%) was among 18-19 year old men.



Figure 2 Percentage of female users who were screened for chlamydia by age group at MI Title X Family Planning Clinics, MI FPAR 2005-2008





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Mission

“The mission of the Michigan Family Planning Program is to enable a person’s voluntary access to family planning services, information and means to exercise personal choice in determining the number and spacing of their children.”

Vision

“The vision of the Michigan Family Planning Program is to reduce unintended pregnancies and improve the overall health status of Michigan families by assuring access to quality effective contraception and reproductive health services.”

Important Preconception Health Recommendations^{1,14}

- Take 400 mcg of folic acid a day for at least 3 months before becoming pregnant to reduce the risk of birth defects.
- Stop smoking and drinking alcohol.
- If you currently have a medical condition, such as anemia, asthma, diabetes, obesity, or epilepsy be sure these are under control.
- Be sure that your vaccinations are up to date.
- Talk to your health care professional about the impact on your pregnancy of over the counter or prescription medicine you are taking, including dietary or herbal supplements.
- Avoid exposures to toxic or potentially infectious materials at work or at home, such as chemicals, or cat and rodent feces.
- Talk to your health care professional about:
 - ◇ Family planning to avoid an unplanned pregnancy
 - ◇ Previous pregnancy complications
 - ◇ Appropriate weight, nutrition and exercise
 - ◇ Oral health
 - ◇ Mental health and emotional health (such as depression and intimate partner violence).

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