



# Domestic Violence and Pregnancy Fact Sheet

- Homicide is the leading cause of death among pregnant women in the United States.<sup>1</sup>
- 50-75% of women abused before pregnancy are abused during pregnancy.<sup>2</sup>
- It is estimated that up to 20% of pregnant women experience violence during their pregnancy, making it more common than gestational diabetes or preeclampsia, conditions routinely screened for in pregnant women by physicians.<sup>3</sup>
- 77% of pregnant homicide victims are killed early (during the first trimester) in the pregnancy.<sup>4</sup>
- Autopsy reports show that of the 34 deceased pregnant women examined in the District of Columbia between 1988 and 1996, 38% were murdered.<sup>5</sup>
- Women with unintended pregnancies are two to four times more likely to experience physical violence than women with planned pregnancies.<sup>6</sup>
- Women who reported having experienced abuse in their relationship were also more likely to report that their pregnancies were unintended.<sup>7</sup>
- In some cases, unintended pregnancies resulted directly from physical violence that included marital rape.<sup>8</sup>
- Among those women whose pregnancies were intended, 5.3 reported abuse around the time of the pregnancy, compared with 12.6% of whose pregnancy was mistimed and 15.3% whose pregnancy was unwanted.<sup>9</sup>
- Pregnant adolescents (ages 13-17) have an elevated risk of violence from their partners when compared with pregnant adults (ages 18+).<sup>10</sup>
- An estimated 5.4%-37.6% of all adolescent girls experience physical violence while pregnant or during the year preceding delivery.<sup>11</sup>
- Pregnant homicide victims are more likely to be killed with a gun than nonpregnant homicide victims.<sup>12</sup>
- Women who are abused during pregnancy are more likely to delay entry into prenatal care.<sup>13</sup>

- Intimate partner violence during pregnancy is linked to depression, substance abuse, smoking, anemia, first and second trimester bleeding, less than optimal weight gain, and unhealthy eating patterns.<sup>14</sup>
- Intimate partner violence during pregnancy is associated with a reduction in birth weight.<sup>15</sup>
- Approximately 72% of U.S. women aged 15-44 years receive at least one reproductive health care service annual.<sup>16</sup>
- Only 18% of pregnant women examined at an urgent care triage unit reported having been asked by their physician about intimate partner violence.<sup>17</sup>
- Less than half of health care providers routinely screen for domestic violence or sexual assault<sup>18</sup> yet 47% of intimate partner homicide and attempted homicide victims were seen by health care professionals in the year prior to their deaths or attacks.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Krulewitch, C., Pierre-Louis, M.L., deLeon-Gome, R., Guy, R., and Green, R. "Hidden From View: Violent Deaths Among Pregnant Women in the District of Columbia, 1988-1996". *Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health*. Vol. 46, pg 4. 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Saltzman, L.E., Johnson, C.H., Gilbert, B.C., and Goodwin, F. "Physical Abuse Around the Time of Pregnancy: An Examination of Prevalence and Risk Factors in 16 States. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, Vol. 7, pg31-42. 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Parsons, L., Goodwin, M.M., and Petersen, R. "Violence Against Women and Reproductive Health: Toward Defining a Role for Reproductive Health Care Services". *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2. pg. 135. 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Krulewitch, C. et al. pg. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Gazmarian. et al. pg. 80.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Evans, G., Chescheir, N. "Prevalence of Domestic Violence Among Women Seeking Abortion Services". *Women's Health Issues*, Vol. 4, pg. 204-9. 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Gazmarian, et al. pg. 88.

<sup>10</sup> Krulewitch, C. et al. pg 8.

<sup>11</sup> McFarlane, J., Parker, B., Soeken, K., Bullock, L. "Assessing For Abuse During Pregnancy. Severity and Frequency of Injuries and Associated Prenatal Care". *Journal American Medical Association*, Vol. 267 (23) pg. 3176-8. 1992.

<sup>12</sup> Krulewitch, C. et al. pg 7.

<sup>13</sup> Parker, B. et al. "Physical and Emotional Abuse in Pregnancy: A Comparison of Adult and Teenage Women". *Nursing Research*, Vol 4, No.2, pg. 80. 2000.

<sup>14</sup> Amaro, H., Fied, L., Cabral, H., & Zuckerman, B. "Violence During Pregnancy and Substance Use." *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 80, pg. 570-589.

<sup>15</sup> Murphy, C., Schei, B.C., Myhr, T.L., and DuMont, J. "Abuse: A Risk Factor For Low Birth Weight?" A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, Vol. 164, pg. 1567-1572.

<sup>16</sup> Abam, J., Chandra, A., Mother, W., Peterson, L., Pyocyanin, L. "Fertility, Family Planning, and Women's Health: New Data From the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth. National Center for Health Studies. *Vital Health Stats*, Vol. 23 (19). 1997.

<sup>17</sup> McGrath, M.E., Hogan, J.W., Peipert, J.F. "A Prevalence Survey of Abuse and Screening for Abuse in Urgent Care Patients. *Obstetric Gynecology*, Vol. 91(4) pg 511-4. 1991.

<sup>18</sup> Parsons, L., et al. pg. 136.

<sup>19</sup> Gazmarian, J.A. et al. pg 80.