

Abstract

Background: Pregnancy ambivalence is defined as conflicting feelings, ideas, and/or beliefs about a potential future pregnancy. The postpartum adolescent and young adult population may experience pregnancy ambivalence, which increases their risk of unintended pregnancy as well as rapid repeat pregnancy. Therefore, it is important to quantify how pregnancy ambivalence changes over time in this population.

Objective: To determine changes in pregnancy attitudes and pregnancy ambivalence over the first 24 months postpartum in adolescent and young adult mothers.

Methods: Patients of the Young Mother's Clinic were surveyed about their pregnancy attitudes at well-child visits at 1, 2, 6, 12, 18, and 24 months postpartum between April 2020 and September 2022. At these visits, patients were asked "When do you want to have your next baby?" (Response options included <1, 1-2, 3-5, >5 years, Never, and Not Sure). Patients were also asked "How would you feel if you became pregnant in the next six months?" (Responses were on a Likert scale ranging from really excited to really upset). Pregnancy ambivalence was defined as discordance between those two items.

Results: A total of 678 patients (1,375 visits) were included with a median age of 20 (range: 13-25 years) and 59% Latinx. The proportion of patients desiring pregnancy in <1 and 1-2 years and who would be excited or very excited increased over time. However, ambivalence about pregnancy also increased.

Conclusions: Adolescent and young adult mothers in the first two years postpartum become more ambivalent about their next pregnancy over time. Providers should identify patients with pregnancy ambivalence, discuss these seemingly conflicting feelings, and support their contraceptive and parenting goals.