

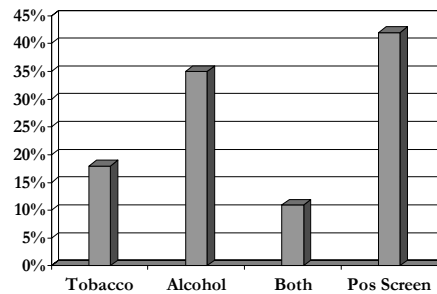
Data Overview San Luis Obispo County, 2004

Over the past two decades, the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs during pregnancy has become a major public health concern. A number of studies have found poor pregnancy and newborn outcomes among women who used alcohol or illegal drugs during pregnancy, and the long term impact of prenatal exposure to even small amounts of alcohol or illegal drugs on the development and behavior of the exposed child is now being documented. However, despite these concerns, substance use by the pregnant woman remains a frequently missed diagnosis, mainly because of the failure to ask women about this problem. We know that by identifying women early in pregnancy, treatment, brief intervention, and prevention services for this special population can be implemented, and the long term outcome of the child can be significantly improved.

In 2004, pregnant women enrolled in prenatal care throughout San Luis Obispo County were screened with the 4P's Plus[®], a screening instrument designed to identify those women at highest risk for using alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs. Eighteen of twenty-one obstetric providers in the County integrated the screen into routine prenatal care. Those women with a positive screen underwent a more thorough assessment for substance use through a follow-up structured clinical interview conducted at the same prenatal visit.

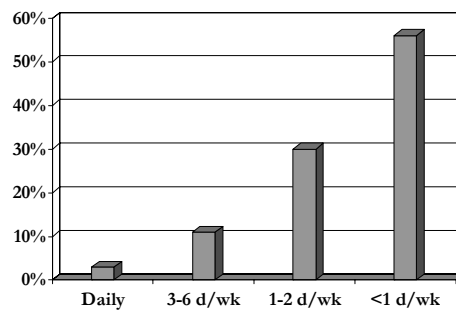
There are approximately 2,600 deliveries per year in San Luis Obispo County. Of these, 1,305 women were screened at their first prenatal visit. Among the 1,305 women, 18% were smoking cigarettes in early pregnancy before they knew they were pregnant, 35% were drinking alcohol, and 11% were using both cigarettes and alcohol. Overall, 42% of the pregnant women had a positive screen for substance use; that is, they were using alcohol and/or tobacco during the early pregnancy.

**Screening Results:
San Luis Obispo County (N = 1,305)**



Once women who were drinking alcohol found out they were pregnant, approximately 1/3 of them ceased drinking. However, 284 women (22% of the overall population of women) continued to drink after learning they were pregnant. Among the 284 women who continued to use alcohol, 3% were drinking daily, 11% were drinking 3 to 6 days per week, 30% were drinking 1 to 2 days per week, and 56% were drinking less than 1 day per week.

**Alcohol Use Patterns
After Knowledge of Pregnancy
(N=284)**



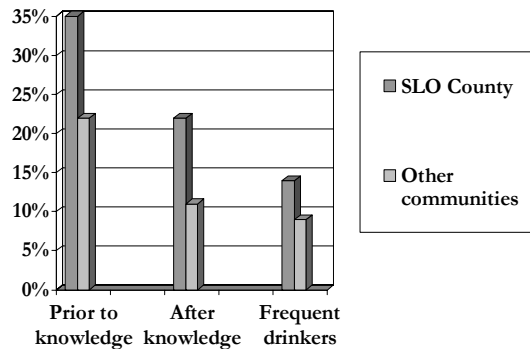
The rates of marijuana use and other illegal drug use among the women were 7% and 3%, respectively, prior to knowledge of pregnancy and dropped to 2% and 1% after learning of the pregnancy. It should be noted, however, that almost all of the women who were using marijuana or illicit drugs also were drinking alcohol. Combining all data and accounting for overlapping polydrug use patterns, 40% of pregnant women in SLO County were using alcohol or illegal drugs before they knew they were pregnant, and 27% continued to use after finding out they were pregnant.

In comparing pregnant women in San Luis Obispo County to approximately 15,000 pregnant women in other communities around the nation who have been screened and assessed for substance use, SLO County women significantly differ from these other groups in three key areas:

Pregnant women in SLO County

- 1) use alcohol at a higher rate during early pregnancy before they know they are pregnant (35% vs. 22%).
- 2) continue to use alcohol at a higher rate after learning of their pregnancy (22% vs. 11%).
- 3) drink more frequently if they continue to drink during pregnancy (14% drink 3 to 7 days per week vs. 9% in other communities).

Alcohol Use Patterns During Pregnancy



The screening and assessment process in San Luis Obispo County has found that alcohol is the major substance of abuse. This has tremendous implications for children being born here, since even small amounts of alcohol can affect fetal brain development and affect long term behavior, learning and mental health. Use of the 4P's Plus[®] has identified not only those pregnant women whose drinking or drug use is at a high enough level to impair daily functioning, but provides an opportunity for early intervention for the much larger group of women whose pregnancies are at risk from relatively small amounts of substance use.

For more information, contact:

Jan Campbell, RN, PHN
 Maternal Child and Adolescent Health Director
 San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department
 (805)-781-5592 email , jcampbell@co.slo.ca.us