What health concerns do women have before pregnancy?
A Listening to Mothers℠ III Data Brief

As research has established the link between women’s health before pregnancy and outcomes such as preterm birth, there is increasing attention to preconception health and ensuring access to health care at this critical time. For the first time, national data provide a snapshot of preconception health among U.S. women. Data are from a nationally representative sample of 2400 women who gave birth from July 2011 through June 2012. Learn more about Childbirth Connection’s Listening to Mothers℠ III survey and access the full report and related documents at transform.childbirthconnection.org/reports/listeningtomothers.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Most pregnancies were planned, and preconception visits are becoming more common. However, about 1 in 3 women were either pregnant earlier than they had planned (30%) or hadn’t planned to get pregnant at all (5%).
- Most survey participants wanted to become pregnant either prior to (20%) or at the time (45%) they became pregnant.
- 16% of women had received medical help to become pregnant (e.g. assisted reproductive technologies).
- Among women with planned pregnancies, 52% had a preconception visit, up from 28% in Listening to Mothers℠ II (2005) and 30% in Listening to Mothers℠ I (2000-2002) surveys.

Almost half of women were overweight or obese entering pregnancy. Women were asked their height and to recall their weight just before pregnancy to calculate Body Mass Index (BMI).
- 9% were underweight before pregnancy by BMI
- 48% were normal weight
- 24% were overweight
- 20% were obese.

Preexisting diabetes, high blood pressure, and depression affected some pregnancies. Although most women did not report these conditions:
- 9% of women reported having Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes before pregnancy
- 8% of women were on prescription blood pressure medications in the month before pregnancy
- 13% were on prescription medication for depression in the month before pregnancy.

Some women received help with food before pregnancy. Almost half (48%) of women received used the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) during pregnancy, and of these, 23% were receiving these services before becoming pregnant.