

# 331 Pregnancy at a Young Age

## Definition/Cut-off Value

Pregnancy at a young age is defined as conception at  $\leq 17$  years of age for the following:

Category	Pregnancy
Pregnant Women	Current pregnancy
Breastfeeding/Non-Breastfeeding	Most recent pregnancy

## Participant Category and Priority Level

Category	Priority
Pregnant Women	I
Breastfeeding Women	I
Non-Breastfeeding Women	III, IV, V or VI

## Justification

Pregnancy before growth is complete is a nutritional risk because of the potential for competition for nutrients for the pregnancy needs and the woman's growth.

The pregnant teenager is confronted with many special stresses that are superimposed on the nutritional needs associated with continued growth and maturation.

Younger pregnant women of low socioeconomic status tend to consume less than recommended amounts of protein, iron, and calcium, and are more likely to come into pregnancy already underweight. Pregnant teens who participate in WIC have been shown to have an associated increase in mean birth weight and a decrease in LBW outcomes.

Adolescent mothers frequently come into pregnancy underweight, have extra growth related nutritional needs, and because they often have concerns about weight and body image, are in need of realistic, health promoting nutrition advice and support during lactation. Diets of adolescents with low family incomes typically contain less iron, and less vitamin A than are recommended during lactation.

The adolescent mother is also confronted with many special stresses superimposed on the normal nutritional needs associated with continued growth. Nutrition status and risk during the postpartum period follow from the nutritional stresses of the past pregnancy, and in turn have an impact on nutrition related risks in subsequent pregnancies.

Poor weight gain and low intakes of a variety of nutrients are more common in pregnant adolescents. Therefore, participation in the WIC Program should be of substantial benefit.

## References

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2. Institute of Medicine. *Nutrition during pregnancy*. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.; 1990.
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