What is PRAMS?
The Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) was developed in 1987 to reduce infant morbidity and mortality by influencing maternal behaviors before, during, and immediately after pregnancy. It is the only surveillance system that provides data about pregnancy and the first few months after birth. PRAMS is an ongoing, state-specific, population-based surveillance system designed to identify groups of women and infants at high risk for health problems, to monitor changes in health status, and to measure progress towards goals in improving the health of mothers and infants.

What is the purpose of PRAMS?
PRAMS was designed to supplement vital records data by providing state-specific data on maternal behaviors and experiences to be used for planning and assessing perinatal health programs. In addition, because PRAMS uses standardized data collection methods, it allows data to be compared among states.

Why is PRAMS important?
PRAMS information can be used to reduce infant morbidity and mortality by influencing maternal behaviors before, during, and immediately after pregnancy. The objectives of PRAMS are:

- To collect population-based data of high scientific quality on topics related to pregnancy and early infancy.
- To conduct comprehensive analyses to better understand the relationships between behaviors, attitudes, and experiences during and immediately after pregnancy.
- To translate results from analyses into information for planning and evaluating public health programs and policy.
- To build the capacity of states to collect, analyze, and translate data to address relevant public health issues.
How does PRAMS work?

Every month, in each participating state, a stratified sample of 100 to 300 women who have recently given birth to a live infant is selected from birth certificates. From 2 to 6 months after delivery, each woman in the sample is sent an explanatory letter that introduces the survey. A 14-page questionnaire is mailed a few days later. A second questionnaire package, and in most states a third, is mailed to those who do not respond. PRAMS staff then telephone those mothers who have not responded to the mailings. Responses are collected in a database and then weighted to be representative of all women giving birth in that state.

Who are the partners in PRAMS?

PRAMS is administered by the Division of Reproductive Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, CDC. PRAMS operates through cooperative agreements between CDC and states that have been awarded competitive grants. PRAMS surveillance currently covers about 78% of all U.S. births.

What information does PRAMS collect?

The questionnaire consists of a core component used by all participating states and a state-specific component developed to address each state’s particular data needs. Core component topics include the following:

- Attitudes and feelings about the pregnancy.
- Barriers to and content of prenatal care.
- Preconception care.
- Influenza vaccination.
- Psychosocial support and stress.
- Use of alcohol and tobacco before and during pregnancy.
- Infant’s early development, health care, sleep position, and exposure to passive smoke.
- HIV testing.
- Health insurance coverage.

How can data from PRAMS be used?

Findings from analyses of PRAMS population-based data can be generalized to an entire state’s population of women whose pregnancies resulted in a live birth. Findings from PRAMS data have been used in many important ways:

- To increase understanding of maternal behaviors and experiences and their relationship to adverse pregnancy outcomes.
- To develop new maternal and child health programs and to modify existing programs.
- To influence public health policy.
- To help health professionals incorporate the latest research findings into their standards of practice.
- To monitor progress toward local, state, and national health objectives and goals.

What surveyed mothers say...

“Thank you for caring.”

“I think this is a great idea. I hope it will help to make mothers and babies healthier in the future.”

“Thank you for sending me this brochure to fill out. I liked the questions you asked.”

“I am very happy that I was selected to participate in PRAMS. Thank you and I hope my answers are able to help other mothers.”

How can I learn more?

For additional information or to obtain copies of this publication, write or call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Reproductive Health, 4770 Buford Highway, NE, Mail Stop F-74, Atlanta, Georgia 30341-3717; telephone: (770) 488-6260. Internet: http://www.cdc.gov/prams.