

Perinatal Intimate Partner Violence



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KEYWORDS

- Intimate partner violence • Physical violence • Sexual violence • Perinatal
- Pregnancy

KEY POINTS

- Violence perpetrated by an intimate partner is estimated to occur in 3.7% to 9.0% of perinatal women.
- There is a pervasive impact of perinatal IPV on several psychological and physical outcomes relevant to the mother and child. These include grave outcomes, such as suicidal ideation, stillbirths, and maternal death.
- Screening for IPV during perinatal health care visits is essential to detect women who are at risk for adverse obstetric health outcomes, facilitate safety planning, and initiate referral to mental health treatment.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious public health problem that involves physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, psychological aggression, or control of reproductive health perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner (Box 1).^{1,2} An intimate partner is an individual with whom one has a close personal relationship; however, the characteristics of the relationship, such as the degree of contact or familiarity with one another can vary.¹ Based on results from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 5.9% of women reported experiencing IPV in the past year.² Prevalence of lifetime exposure to specific forms of IPV is alarming, ranging from 8.6% for reproductive control to 47.1% for psychological aggression.

The highest rates of IPV are reported among women who are of reproductive age, with the greatest prevalence occurring among individuals 18 to 34 years old.^{1,2}

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Box 1**Definitions and lifetime prevalence of forms of intimate partner violence****Physical Violence (32.4%)**

- Behaviors with the potential for causing injury, harm, disability, or death
- Examples include slapping, pushing, choking, pulling hair, kicking, and use of restraint

Sexual Violence (16.4%)

- Unwanted sexual experiences that range from noncontact to completed rape
- Rape includes completed forced penetration, attempted forced penetration, and completed alcohol or drug-facilitated penetration

Stalking (27.4%)

- Patterns of harassing or threatening tactics that cause fear or safety concerns

Psychological Aggression (47.1%)

- Expressive aggression and coercive control behaviors
- Examples include name-calling, insults, denying access to basic resources

Control of Reproductive or Sexual Health (8.6%)

- Refusal to wear a condom or attempting to get a person pregnant when the person did not want to become pregnant

Therefore, it is essential to investigate IPV among perinatal women. The current review outlines the following for IPV:

1. Definition and prevalence
2. Maternal risk factors and obstetric health associations
3. Neonatal outcomes
4. Long-term impact on children
5. Screening and referral interventions

PERINATAL INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Perinatal IPV refers to experiences of violence that occur 12 months before pregnancy, during pregnancy, and up to 1 year following a pregnancy.^{3,4} Based on population studies, estimated rates of perinatal IPV in the form of physical violence range from 3.7% to 9.0%.^{3,4} However, it is difficult to estimate the rates of perinatal IPV because these population-based studies have focused on physical violence, without adequately assessing for other forms of perinatal IPV, such as sexual violence and psychological aggression. Further, frequencies of IPV are higher in clinic-based samples compared with epidemiologic samples. Among 104 rural women attending prenatal care in the beginning of their third trimester, 20.2% experienced sexual IPV, 27.9% reported physical IPV, and 79.8% endorsed psychological aggression during their pregnancy.⁵ Other clinic-based studies have reported rates of perinatal IPV up to 16.4% and 73.0% for physical and psychological IPV, respectively.^{6,7} Perinatal providers are in a unique position to identify, evaluate, and facilitate services for women experiencing IPV.

MATERNAL RISK FACTORS AND MENTAL AND OBSTETRIC HEALTH ASSOCIATIONS OF PERINATAL INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Risk factors for perinatal IPV include lower socioeconomic status, being unmarried, housing instability, younger age, Medicaid insurance, and fewer years of education.^{4,8} Rates of IPV tend to be slightly higher during the year before pregnancy than during

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