



### Homeless and Expecting

Hundreds of thousands of people around the United States are affected by homelessness. This is already a vulnerable situation filled with decreased access to basic healthcare needs, like medical checkups and necessary medicines. For pregnant women, especially, this vulnerability is even greater; pregnant women affected by homelessness lack the basic care that is vital for their health and that of their baby's.

A 2019 study, for example, found that “women experiencing homelessness were more than twice as likely to experience a complication that affected their health during birth.” They were also “almost twice as likely to have an early or threatened labor or a hemorrhage during pregnancy.” This is likely due to the women's' restricted access to necessary prenatal medicines, healthy foods, sufficient rest, and prenatal care checkups.

Even women who are in housing facilities still experience adverse effects regarding their pregnancies. The same study found that homeless pregnant women “living in shelter were associated with higher rates of hemorrhaging and maternal birth complications compared with their health outcomes before entering shelter.” This demonstrates the need for specialized care in homeless shelters.

A homeless pregnant woman’s situation is very different from that of other homeless individuals. Pregnant women are not living only for themselves, but also for their baby. The care they receive must reflect that.

By Nicole Alesso