

Unintended Pregnancies on the Rise Among 20-Somethings like Bristol Palin: Here's Why

Former teen mom-turned-unplanned pregnancy spokesperson Bristol Palin made a surprising announcement yesterday: She's pregnant again, and it seems unintended.

"I wanted you guys to be the first to know that I am pregnant," she said in a very candid blog post, titled *Big News*. "Honestly, I've been trying my hardest to keep my chin up on this one. ...I know this has been, and will be, a huge disappointment to my family, to my close friends, and to many of you."

She continued, "Life moves on no matter what. So no matter how you feel, you get up, get dressed, show up, and never give up. When life gets tough, there is no other option but to get tougher."

Palin first made headlines during her mother's vice-presidential campaign in 2008 when it was revealed that the then-teenager was pregnant. After giving birth to her son, Tripp, she became a spokesperson for teen pregnancy.

Palin canceled her wedding to Dakota Meyer, a marine, this May, a week before the ceremony was scheduled to take place. "I know God's plan is greater than anything else," she wrote at the time, "and Tripp and I are in Alaska beginning to rebuild our lives under much different circumstances than we anticipated."

She has not named the father or specified how far along she is in her current pregnancy.

Palin's situation isn't uncommon.

According to research from the Guttmacher Institute, women who have one unintended pregnancy are more likely to have another. They also have higher overall fertility than other women, which could lead to subsequent unplanned pregnancies.

Unplanned pregnancies are on the rise in the U.S.

The most recent Guttmacher data found that more than half of pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended, and the rate of unintended pregnancies in America has been steadily increasing since 1994.

But the rate of teen pregnancies — which experts say are the most likely to be unintentional — is at a historic low. What's happening?

Experts say a growing number of women in their 20s are experiencing unintended pregnancies.

"The face of unplanned pregnancy looks a lot like Bristol Palin—a single woman in her 20s," Bill Albert, chief program officer for The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, tells Yahoo Health.

He cites data collected by his organization that found a whopping seven in 10 pregnancies among unmarried women in their 20s are unplanned.

"Unplanned pregnancy is not just a teen issue," women's health expert Jennifer Wider, M.D., tells Yahoo Health.

There are several reasons for the rise among 20-somethings.

One is that, with more access to contraception, women are having more sex. Since contraception isn't foolproof, there is an increased chance that a woman will become unintentionally pregnant when she's more sexually active.

Another is that women in their 20s may be cohabitating with a partner, which Wider says also increases the risk of an unplanned pregnancy.

Albert says a disconnect between cause and effect among 20-somethings is to blame as well. "When you ask most young women, 'Do you want to get pregnant right now?' They say 'no, absolutely not,'" he says. "But when you ask 'How likely is it that you're going to have unprotected sex in the next three months?' many of the same women freely admit that they're going to have unprotected sex."

Even more shocking, Albert points out that many 20-somethings are resorting to what he calls "magical thinking" when it comes to their odds of getting pregnant. His organization found that four in 10 young adults believe that it doesn't matter whether they use birth control or not—when it's their time to get pregnant, it will happen.

Despite the status quo, Albert remains "optimistic" that the high rates of unplanned pregnancies in the U.S. will decline, largely due to a growing number of women using IUDs, implants, and other long-term birth control methods.

As for Palin, she says she will be okay, writing, "My little family always has, and always will come first. Tripp, this new baby, and I will all be fine."