

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released the first data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth in reports documenting patterns of contraceptive use and teen sexual activity. The 28th edition of the annual report card on the nation's health, *Health, United States, 2004*, shows that almost half of all Americans use one or more prescription drugs. A new study examines the relationship between marital status and health.

2002 NATIONAL SURVEY OF FAMILY GROWTH RELEASES FINDINGS ON TEEN SEXUAL ACTIVITY AND CONTRACEPTION

Sexual activity declined significantly for younger teenage girls and for teenage boys from 1995 to 2002, and teen contraceptive use improved in significant ways, according to a new study which compares new findings from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth with the previous survey conducted in 1995. The proportion of never-married females 15–17 years of age who had ever had sexual intercourse dropped significantly from 38% in 1995 to 30% in 2002. In 1995, 68% had had intercourse at age 18–19, compared with 69% in 2002. For male teens, the percent of those who were sexually experienced dropped significantly in both age groups: from 43% to 31% at ages 15–17, and from 75% to 64% at ages 18–19. These and other data suggest that teenagers are delaying sex until somewhat older ages.

At their first premarital intercourse, teens were most likely to choose condoms for birth control—66% reported using a condom when they became sexually active. Teens are more likely in recent years to use contraception when they begin having intercourse—79% in 1999–2002, up from 61% in the 1980's. Teens were also more likely to have used contraception at their most recent intercourse in 2002 (71% in 1995, compared with 83% in 2002). These changes in sexual activity and contraceptive use are consistent with the downward trend in teen pregnancy and births over the past decade.

The National Survey of Family Growth is conducted periodically by NCHS to collect data on factors that influence the American family, including data on marriage, divorce, and cohabitation; contraception; infertility; pregnancy outcomes, and births. Data are collected in household interviews with a nationally representative sample of women (since 1982) and men (beginning in 2002) ages 15–44.

Another new report from the survey covers trends in contraceptive use among women 15–44 years of age. The leading methods of contraception in the United States in 2002 were the oral contraceptive pill (11.7 million women), female sterilization (10.3 million), the male condom (6.9 million), male sterilization (3.5 million), and the Depo-Provera injectable (2.0 million). Together, these five methods accounted for 90% of contraceptive users. For young women, the leading method was the oral contraceptive pill;

for women age 35 and older, the leading method was female sterilization. Method choice varied sharply by such characteristics as education. For example, college-educated women were four times as likely to use the pill, four times as likely to rely on male sterilization, and one-fourth as likely to use female sterilization as women who did not graduate from high school. Nearly all women of reproductive age have used contraception: 98% of all women who had ever had intercourse had used at least one contraceptive method. About 82% of women have used the oral contraceptive pill at some time in their lives; about 90% have had a partner use the male condom.

Two new reports present these and other detailed findings from the survey. *Teenagers in the United States: Sexual Activity, Contraceptive Use, and Childbearing, 2002*¹ and *Use of Contraception and Use of Family Planning Services in the United States, 1982-2002*² are available on the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/nchs.

HEALTH, UNITED STATES, 2004, FEATURES NEW DATA ON PRESCRIPTION DRUG USE

Almost half of all people take at least one prescription medicine and one in six takes three or more medications, according to the annual report, *Health, United States, 2004* which provides an overview of the nation's health as well as this year's special feature on prescription drug use. Prescription drug use is rising among people of all ages, and use increases with age. Five out of six people age 65 and older are taking at least one medication and almost half the elderly take three or more. Adult use of antidepressants almost tripled from 1988 to 1994 and from 1999 to 2000. Ten percent of women 18 and older and 4% of men now take antidepressants. Prescriptions for nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, antidepressants, blood glucose/sugar regulators, and cholesterol-lowering statin drugs, in particular, increased notably from 1996 to 2002. NCHS's National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey found a 13% increase from 1988–1994 and 1999–2000 in the proportion of Americans taking at least one drug and a 40% jump in the proportion taking three or more medicines.

The annual report to Congress showed that health expenditures climbed 9.3% in 2002 to \$1.6 trillion. Although prescription drugs comprise only one-tenth of the total medical bill, they remain the fastest growing expenditure. The price of drugs rose 5%, but wider use of medicines pushed total expenditures up 15.3% in 2002. Drug expenditures have risen at least 15% every year since 1998. Medicare, the federal health insurance program for the nation's seniors and disabled residents, will begin routinely paying for prescription drugs in January 2006. After a \$250 deductible, Medicare will cover three-quarters of drug costs up to \$2,250 a year. The United States spent 14.9% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on health care in 2002, up from 14.1% in 2001. Only two other countries, Switzerland and Germany,

spent as much as 11% of their GDP in 2001, the latest year that international statistics were available. Canada was fourth at 9.7% of GDP.

Among the report's findings on prescription drug use:

- Three times as many white adults as African American or Mexican adults took antidepressants;
- Boys were prescribed drugs to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) twice as often as girls, but antidepressants were prescribed to boys and girls at the same rates;
- Private health insurance covered almost half of prescription drug costs in 2002, up from a quarter in 1990. People paid 30% out of their own pockets.

Health, United States includes a chart book of selected health measures and 153 trend tables with current and historical information on health status, health care utilization, resources, and expenditures. The data are presented by age, sex, race, and ethnic background, and some measures are also shown by state.

Other noteworthy findings:

- The report also found that life expectancy at birth rose to 74.5 years for men and 79.9 years for women in 2002. For those turning 65, life expectancy is age 81.6 for men and 84.5 for women. Racial and ethnic disparities in mortality persist, but the gaps in life expectancy between the sexes and between the black and white populations are narrowing;
- Deaths from on-the-job injuries fell 23% from 1992–2002 to four deaths per 100,000 workers.
- Injuries accounted for 36% of visits to emergency departments in 2001–2002.

The complete report with interactive web links is at www.cdc.gov/nchs.hus.

MARITAL STATUS AND HEALTH

The latest NCHS research on marital status and health suggests that married adults are healthier than divorced, widowed, or never-married adults. A new report, *Marital Status and Health: United States, 1999–2002*, was based on interviews with 127,545 adults aged 18 and older as part of the National Health Interview Survey. The study looked at health status and limitations, health conditions, and health-related behaviors according to marital status and also by age, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic factors such as education and poverty status.

Among the findings in the report:

- Nearly 60% of adults are married, 10.4% are separated or divorced, 6.6% are widowed, 19% are never-married, and 5.7% are living with a partner. Marital status varies greatly among racial/ethnic groups: approximately 61% of white adults, 58% of Hispanic adults, and 38% of African American adults are married, according to the survey.
- Married adults are less likely than other adults to be in fair or poor health, and are less likely to suffer from health conditions such as headaches and serious psychological distress.
- Married adults are less likely to be limited in various activities, including work and other activities of daily living.
- Married adults are less likely to smoke, drink heavily, or be physically inactive; however, married men are more likely to be overweight or obese than other men.
- Adults who live in cohabiting relationships are more likely to have health problems than married adults and more closely resemble divorced and separated adults.
- The association between marital status and health is most striking in the youngest age group, although it persists throughout the age groups studied.

While the results show that married adults are generally in better health than unmarried adults, the reasons for better health status among married adults cannot be determined with cross-sectional data collected in the National Health Interview Survey. More information about the survey and the report are on the NCHS website.

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