NCHS Dataline

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has issued a number of new reports on a wide range of current health topics. All are available on the NCHS website at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs. The Early Release of Selected Data from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) series continues to produce estimates on 15 key health indicators on a quarterly basis and has just released data for January through March 2008. The series monitors health indicators such as general health status, health behaviors, access to and use of health services, preventive care, and other topics. The latest NCHS Data Briefs address the prevalence of depression in the U.S. and children's use of mental health services. NCHS prepares to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).

EARLY RELEASE DATA

The NHIS is a large-scale, household interview survey of a sample of the nation's civilian, noninstitutionalized population. NCHS updates estimates for 15 selected health measures based on data from the January through March 2008 NHIS and presents estimates from 1997 through 2007 for comparison in the Early Release of Selected Estimates from the NHIS.[1] To provide access to the most recent information from the survey, the Early Release measures are published prior to final data editing and final weighting. The estimates are updated quarterly, as each new quarter of the NHIS data becomes available. The Early Release report includes these measures: lack of health insurance coverage and type of coverage, usual place to go for medical care, obtaining needed medical care, receipt of influenza vaccination, receipt of pneumococcal vaccination, obesity, leisure-time physical activity, current smoking, alcohol consumption, human immunodeficiency virus testing, general health status, personal care needs, serious psychological distress, diagnosed diabetes, and asthma episodes and current asthma.

For each selected health measure, a figure is presented showing the trend over time from 1997 to January through March 2008 for the total population, followed by figures and tables showing estimates by age group and sex, based on data from the January through March 2008 NHIS. Also, estimates (adjusted by age, sex, or both, where appropriate) are provided for three race/ethnicity groups (Hispanic; non-Hispanic white, single race; and non-Hispanic black, single race) using data from the January through March 2008 NHIS. Key findings are highlighted with bulleted text. Data tables providing values displayed in the figures are included at the end of each section. The release provides overall age-adjusted and crude estimates by sex for all indicators. The NHIS questions used to define the selected health measures are included in Table I in the Appendix.

Highlights of the current release show that:

- For the first quarter of 2008, 66.2% of people of all ages reported having excellent or very good health.
- In early 2008, about 8% of adults had been diagnosed with diabetes, up from about 5% in 1997.
- In early 2008, the percentage of people uninsured at the time of the interview was 14.3%, representing no statistically significant change from the 2007 estimate of 14.5%.
- For January through March 2008, the percentage of people who had a usual place to go for medical care was 86.4%. Over the past decade, that percentage has ranged from 86.2% in 1997 to 88.0% in 2001.
- Slightly more than 6% of the population was unable to obtain needed medical care due to cost at some time during the past 12 months.
- In the first quarter of 2008, the percentage of adults who had received an influenza shot during the past 12 months was 68% for people aged 65 years and older; 42% for those aged 50 to 64 years; and 19% for people aged 18 to 49 years.
- About 30% of U.S. adults aged 18 years and older engaged in regular leisure-time physical activity, according to 2008 first quarter findings.
- For January through March 2008, 20.8% of U.S. adults were current smokers; the annual prevalence of smoking among adults had declined from 24.7% in 1997 to less than 20% in 2007.

NEW DATA BRIEFS

NCHS Data Brief is a relatively new series of short statistical publications on topics of current public health interest. Along with summary highlights in easy-to-read tables, charts, and graphs, the reports include

an interpretation and explanation of the findings. Recent issues have looked at mental health services for children and depression.

A new NCHS Data Brief examines children's use of mental health services with data from the NHIS.[2] From 2005 to 2006, 15% of U.S. children aged 4 to 17 years (8.3 million children) had parents who talked to a health-care provider or school staff about their child's emotional or behavioral difficulties. This included 18% of boys and 11% of girls in that age group. Approximately 5% of children were prescribed medications for difficulties with emotions or behavior, most often for conditions of hyperactivity, impulsivity, or other symptoms associated with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Another 5% of children received treatment other than medication, such as behavioral therapy, crisis intervention services, or complementary or alternative therapy.

Data from the 2005–2006 NHANES showed that in any two-week period, 5.6% of the U.S. population aged 12 years and older experienced depression. Rates were higher for those aged 40 to 50 years (7.3%) than for any other age group. Depression was more common in females than in males and among non-Hispanic black people than among non-Hispanic white people. Rates were higher among poor people than among those with higher incomes. About four in five individuals with depression reported functional difficulties, and more than a quarter had serious difficulties in work and home life. Less than a third of those with mental health difficulties contacted a mental health professional in the past year. "Depression in the United States Household Population, 2005–2006"[3] is based on data collected in interviews with a sample of the civilian, noninstitutionalized population.

NHANES TURNS 50

Conducted by NCHS, NHANES is one of the major general purpose health surveys of the U.S. population. Over its 50-year history, the survey has monitored the health of Americans and produced data used for national health policies and programs. The survey consists of interviews, standardized health examinations, and laboratory tests conducted with a sample of the U.S. civilian, noninstitutionalized population. NHANES is conducted in mobile examination centers, which travel across the U.S. to reach the populations selected to participate in the survey. The survey has produced landmark findings on high blood lead levels among children, iron and folate deficiencies, and the rise in obesity and increase in diabetes. NHANES findings have tracked the downturn in hypertension and high cholesterol levels after the institution of education and prevention programs and more effective treatments. Throughout 2009, the survey's history, accomplishments, and future directions will be showcased in events, activities, publications, and posters. For more information, check the NHANES website at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm.

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REFERENCES

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2. Simpson G, Cohen R, Pastor P, Reuben C. Use of mental health services in the past 12 months by children aged 14–17 years: United States, 2005–2006. NCHS Data Brief No. 8. Hyattsville (MD): National Center for Health Statistics; 2008.
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