



National Center for Health Statistics

Monitoring
the Nation's
Health

Overview

The **National Center for Health Statistics** (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions. These health statistics allow us to:

- Document the health status of the U.S. population and selected subgroups.
- Track impact of major policy initiatives including the Affordable Care Act.
- Identify disparities in health status and use of health care by race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, other population characteristics and geographic region.
- Document access to and use of the health care system.
- Monitor trends in health indicators.
- Support biomedical and health services research.
- Provide data to support public policies and programs.

Health Topics Addressed by NCHS

NCHS produces data on a wide range of health indicators such as:

- Health insurance coverage and its relationship to access and utilization of health care services.
- Prevalence of health conditions such as obesity and overweight, cholesterol, hypertension, HIV status, and smoking among the U.S. population.
- Exposure to environmental chemicals.
- Nutrition and physical activity.
- Growth charts to monitor the development of children.
- Patient safety and quality including adverse effects of medical treatment.
- Injuries and disabilities and their impact on health status and functioning.
- Infant mortality, stillbirths, life expectancy, and teen births.
- Leading causes of death specific to age, race, ethnic and gender groups.
- Practice of medicine in the U.S., evolution of health information technology, changes in roles and practices of health care providers, and use of resources.
- Changes in the health care delivery system, including emergency department use and capacity, increasing use of prescription drugs, and increasing demand for community-based long term care.

NCHS Data Sources

Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides a broad perspective to help us understand the population's health, influences on health, and health outcomes. Sources of data collection include:

- Birth and death certificates
- Patient medical records
- Personal interviews (households and by phone)
- Standardized physical examinations and lab tests
- Facility information

For further information about NCHS and its programs, visit us at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs>, or call the Office of Planning, Budget and Legislation at 301-458-4100.

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