



Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health
Child Health and Related News
for March & April 2001

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(NOTE: Sources are listed above respective news blurbs)

This article is from Join Together Online.

Visit this page on the Web at:

<http://www.jointogether.org/sa/default.jtml?O=266292>

#1 Family Support Prevents Teen Suicide

A new report found that family support plays an important role in preventing teen suicide, Reuters reported March 6.

According to the study conducted by Dr. Michael D. Resnick and colleagues at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, American adolescents and teenagers are more likely to attempt suicide if they had previous suicide attempts, used illicit drugs or alcohol, had academic problems, or had a history of being a perpetrator or victim of violence.

On the other hand, the report determined that teens are 70 to 85 percent less likely to attempt suicide if they have a sense of "connectedness" to parents, family, or other care-giving adults. The results hold true for teens in all ethnic groups.

"What this study affirms is the remarkably important role of parents

and families, adults outside of the family, and school as sources of connection and anchoring points in the lives of young people," said Resnick.

The report's findings were based on interviews conducted between 1994 and 1996 with more than 13,000 students in grades 7 through 12 from 134 schools throughout the United States.

"There is no reason to give up on a kid and say nothing can be done," said Resnick. "What this analysis shows is that protective factors can offset the effects of risk factors. The good news in this is that when one of those environments is not nurturing -- when for example a family is not a source of love and support -- other adults and schools can provide that kind of connectedness to kids that we see as very beneficial in preventing suicide in the short and long term."

The report is published in the March issue of the journal Pediatrics.

Connect for Kids Weekly

<http://www.connectforkids.org/>

#2 Reports Of Child Abuse, Neglect Grew 33% In 1990s

According to a new survey by Prevent Child Abuse America. At the same time, the rate of growth in reports of child abuse and neglect slowed substantially as the decade progressed. State reporting agencies cited the following reasons for continuing rates of child abuse and neglect: poverty and other economic strain; parental capacity and skill; other incidents involving domestic violence; and substance abuse by one or more parents: 85% named substance abuse as the most frequently cited problem exhibited by families reported for maltreatment.

http://www.preventchildabuse.org/media/03_13_01_3.html

#3 Lesson Plans for Engaging Youth in Community Planning

The American Planning Association has resources for community planners who want to inform and engage young people in decision-making and community building. Detailed lesson plans are ready to use with young people to explore the strengths and gaps in their own community.

http://www.planning.org/ResourcesZine/display_category.asp?CatType=Category&Cat=19

#4 How are Hispanic Children and Families Faring?

Following news from the 2000 Census of the rapid growth in America's Hispanic population, Child Trends presents a fact sheet to Hispanic children and families, reviewing statistics on education and workforce preparation, adolescent risk-taking, family structure, health and safety and poverty.

<http://www.childtrends.org/PDF/Hispanicfactsheet2.pdf>

MCH Alert

Tomorrow's Policy Today

National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health

<http://www.ncemch.org/alert>

#5 Study Finds That Early Adolescent Girls Who Diet Are More Likely To Smoke

Early adolescent girls who diet are at an increased risk for initiating smoking, compared to those who do not diet, claims a study published in the March issue of the American Journal of Public Health. The study findings are based on data collected from 932 sixth- and seventh-grade students who participated in the Planet Health study, a school-based intervention study of diet and physical activity. Data were collected at baseline in 1995 and at follow-up in 1997.

The authors of the study found that

- * Girls who reported dieting once per week or less in the past month at baseline were almost twice as likely as girls who reported no dieting to have become smokers by follow-up;
- * Girls who reported dieting more than once per week in the past month at baseline were nearly four times more likely than girls who reported no dieting to have become smokers by follow-up; and
- * Among boys, there was no significant association between baseline dieting frequency and risk of having becoming a smoker by follow-up.

The authors suggest that tobacco-use interventions may need to be included in programs for young people engaged in unhealthy dietary practices. They also recommend that "planners of youth programs intended to prevent smoking may need to consider strategies to reduce the prevalence of dieting, particularly among girls, to achieve their health promotion goals."

Austin SB, Gortmaker SL. 2001. Dieting and smoking initiation in early adolescent girls and boys: A prospective study. American Journal of Public Health 91(3):446-450.

#6 Adolescent Birthrate Falls To Record Low, Finds Study

The 1999 adolescent birthrate was the lowest seen in the United States since 1940, according to a study published recently by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In addition, in 1999 the number of triplet births and higher-order multiple births declined for the first time in 10 years. To obtain this and other birth-related information, the authors of the study analyzed birth certificate data for 3.96 million 1999 births. The study includes the authors' findings on maternal demographic characteristics, pregnant women's use of medical care, and infant characteristics.

The report findings include the following:

- * In 1999 the birthrate among adolescents ages 15 to 19 was 49.6 births per 1,000 female adolescents; in 1991 the rate was 62.1 births per 1,000 female adolescents;
- * The rate of twin births increased by 3% from 1998 to 1999, and the rate of triplet births and other higher-order multiple births fell by 4%;
- * In 1999 first-time mothers' median age increased to 24.5, up from 1998;
- * From 1998 to 1999 the number of births to unmarried women increased by 1% to 1,308,560, the highest number ever reported;
- * The rate of pregnant women who received prenatal care increased from 82.8% in 1998 to 83.2% in 1999;
- * The rate of women who smoked cigarettes during pregnancy, which has fallen steadily since 1989, declined to 12.6% in 1999, but tobacco use by pregnant adolescents continued to increase; and
- * The rate of preterm births (less than 37 weeks' gestation) increased slightly, rising from 11.6% in 1998 to 11.8% in 1999.

In a related press release, Dr. Edward Sondik, director of the CDC National Center for Health Statistics, commented that "the data from this report serve as important pieces to the overall puzzle of maternal and infant health in this country." He added, "We've seen the continuation of

several very positive trends, some not very positive trends, and a few surprises, such as the drop of triplet and higher-order multiple births."

Ventura SJ, Martin JA, Curtin SC, et al. 2001. Births: Final data for 1999. National Vital Statistics Reports 49(1):1-4. Report available at <<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs>>.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2001, April 17. Higher order multiple births drop for first time in a decade. Press release available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/releases/01news/multibir.htm>.

#7 Study Examines Effects Of Maternal Abuse On Mothers And Their Children

Women who have been victims of sexual or physical abuse as children or adults are more likely to experience maternal depression than women who have not been victims of abuse, according to a study published in the April issue of Pediatrics. In addition, children of women who have been abused are more likely to have behavior problems.

For the study, the authors collected data from 419 female primary caregivers (mostly mothers) and children who participated in a multi-site longitudinal study of children's health and development and maltreatment among high-risk families. The study group and a control group were evaluated when the children were between 4 and 5 years of age and again when they were 6 to assess ways the women's handled conflict, maternal depression rates and severity, and the outcomes of the children whose mothers participated in the study.

The authors found that

- * Mothers victimized both when they were adults and when they were children or adolescents had higher levels of depression, reported more internalizing and externalizing behavior problems in their children, and reported more use of harsh parenting practices than mothers who had no victimization history;
- * Mothers with a history of both sexual and physical abuse reported more internalizing and externalizing behavior problems in their children and harsher parenting practices and had higher levels of depression than mothers with no victimization history;
- * There were no differences in maternal mental health, parenting, or child outcomes in mothers who were sexually victimized compared with those who were physically victimized; and
- * The physical health and cognitive development of children whose mothers participated in the study were not affected by their mothers' victimization history.

The authors conclude that "maternal victimization is associated with harmful implications for mental health and parenting, as well as for offspring" and that "routine screening for these problems, followed by appropriate evaluation and intervention may reduce maternal depression, improve parenting, and reduce the incidence of behavior problems in children."

Dobowitz H, Black MM, Kerr MA, et al. 2001. Type and timing of mothers' victimization: Effects on mothers and children. Pediatrics 107(4):728-735.

HandsNet WebClipper Digest

The WebClipper Digest is HandsNet's weekly overview of cross-cutting human services news from throughout the World Wide Web.

<http://www.webclipper.org>

#8 Breaking The Link Between Child Maltreatment And Juvenile Delinquency

An article from CWLA's Children's Voice journal says although most children who endure abuse or neglect grow up healthy and law-abiding, the exceptions yield a disturbing and widespread irony: When a community fails to protect a child from harm, it may soon be calling for that young person's head. <http://www.cwla.org/articles/cv0103breaklink.htm>

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New York Times
www.nytimes.com

#9 Teens turn to Internet for health answers

NEW YORK, Mar 23 (Reuters Health) - Embarrassment, the need for confidentiality and a desire to find easily accessible answers drive many teens to the Internet in search of health information, a new study reveals.

More than three-quarters of 10th-grade students surveyed used the Internet to answer questions about health. Nearly half (49%) accessed information for personal use and more than two-thirds

(67%) accessed information for school projects, the survey found. Results of the survey, which included more than 400 students, are being presented this week at the annual meeting of the Society for Adolescent Medicine in San Diego, California.

"This suggests they are going to the Internet for school use but that may serve as an entrée for personal use," Dr. Dina L.G. Borzekowski from Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City, said in an interview. "Kids realize what a resource the Internet can be. They are very savvy and understand what they can get from the Internet, more so than adults."

Topics most frequently researched include sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), diet, exercise, sexual behaviors, violence and alcohol use, among others. Boys were just as likely to turn on their computers in search of health-related answers as girls. Ethnicity, the mother's education, and the teen's own health status did not affect how often adolescents searched the Internet for answers.

Young people of different ethnic backgrounds did appear to research different topics, however. Whites and Asians more frequently searched for information on diets while Latinos and blacks were more likely to search for information on violence among peers and gangs, findings show.

While the Internet can allow teenagers to research their questions privately, it can also be used to self-diagnose medical problems, Borzekowski said.

"There is anecdotal evidence that kids use the Internet for health information and then go to their (health) provider with reams of information, which may or may not be relevant to their own health."

But adults, she concedes, may be just as likely to do the same.