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Selected Health Status Indicators and Behaviors of Young Adults, United States—2003

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This study examined the prevalence of selected clinical preventive health services, health status indicators, health risk behaviors, and health-promoting behaviors among adults aged 18 to 24 years in the general U.S. population. The study analyzed data from the 2003 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Nearly 30% of young adults lacked health care coverage. When 21- to 24-year-olds were compared with 18- to 20-year-olds, a 32% increase was noted in current cigarette smoking, a 37% increase in current binge drinking, a 48% increase in current alcohol use, a 27% increase in overweight and obesity, and an 8% decrease in engaging in sufficient physical activity. Results from this study reveal several areas for concern regarding the health of young adults. Continuation of education beyond high school and being married are associated with some health benefits. Carefully crafted health promotion programs and appropriate policies need to be placed in locations that are accessed by this population.

Determinants of Nutrition Label Use Among College Students

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The purpose of this research was to assess the frequency of nutrition label use among college students and its relationship to nutrition and label knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs regarding diet-disease relationships, and to determine factors predictive of frequent or infrequent label use. This study utilized a cross-sectional design. Volunteer participants included a convenience sample of 1,294 students from a large university in Texas. A 57-item survey instrument was used to assess nutrition label knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs about diet-disease relationships. Open-ended items were included to capture reasons for frequent/infrequent label use. Statistical analyses included frequency distributions, Pearson's correlations, independent sample t-tests, and binary logistic regression. Label users had greater knowledge, more favorable attitudes, and more accurate perceptions of diet-disease relationships than nonusers. Females exhibited greater knowledge, more favorable attitudes, and more frequent label use than males. Health reasons, looking for specific information, weight control, and knowledge predicted frequent label use. Desire for certain foods, time constraints, and "don't care" attitudes predicted infrequent use. These predictors of frequent/infrequent use suggest important points of intervention for increasing label use among selected groups of college students.

Assessing Overweight and Cardiovascular Risks Among College Students

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Although studies regarding health issues and the obesity epidemic have increased in recent years, few of these studies target college-aged students. The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate the differences in race/ethnicity with respect to prevalence of overweight/obesity (defined by body mass index or BMI) among college students attending an urban university. In addition, the demographic characteristics and cardiovascular risks between the overweight and obese group (n=138) were compared to the underweight and normal weight group (n=349). The study included 487 college students under 40 years of age who identified their origin as white (non-Hispanic), black (non-Hispanic), or Hispanic. There were 32.65% white, 33.26% Hispanic, and 34.09% black. The mean and median ages were 21 and 19 years, respectively. The overall prevalence of overweight/obesity was 28.11%, with 23.91% (white), 34.06% (Hispanic), and 42.03% (black). Age-, gender-, and race-/ethnicity-adjusted cardiovascular risk levels (blood pressure, pulse pressure, blood glucose and lipid profiles) significantly varied between two groups. The findings suggest that screening cardiovascular risks among a college-aged population is

warranted. Our study further indicates the need for weight management and risk reduction of overweight-related chronic diseases on campus.

Game-Day Survey Results: Looking at Football Fan Alcohol-related Behaviors

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On college campuses, alcohol abuse is a challenge particularly on football game days. From previous research, it is known that fans drink more and are more affected by excessive alcohol consumption than non-fans. This study explored age and gender issues regarding behaviors and consequences of typical game-day alcohol consumption. A self-administered paper-pencil survey, given to 497 respondents, evaluated alcohol consumption behaviors of fans “tailgating” at a college football game. A descriptive discriminant analysis was conducted with data from respondents who reported drinking (N=352). Three discriminant variables interpreted from data suggest the following: (1) males drink more than females, but females have more adverse consequences when drinking on game days; (2) respondents ages 21–26 years drink more alcohol and are more likely to perceive that friends drink excessively versus other age groups; and (3) respondents ages 24–26 years were more aware than other groups of anti-alcohol campus campaigns, but drink more on game days, and are more likely to frequent bars and tailgating areas. A “one-size-fits-all” approach to intervention is not adequate for college campus population needs. It is important to identify target populations for tailored intervention efforts concerning outcomes of excessive drinking during game days.

CDC’s Approach to Educating Coaches about Sports-related Concussion

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Sports-related concussions can happen to any athlete in any sport. Each year in the United States, an estimated 1.6-3.8 million sports and recreation-related traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) occur, most of which can be classified as concussions. To help coaches prevent, recognize, and better manage sports-related concussions, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (CDC’s Injury Center) applied a comprehensive health-education approach to developing a multimedia tool kit for high school athletic coaches. From developing an expert panel and pretesting message concepts to pilot testing, promoting, and evaluating the final product, CDC has shown that this undertaking is highly effective. Results of the pilot study and promotion efforts show that the tool kit is well received by coaches and school officials and that it meets a critical health education need.

Sharing the Folic Acid Message with Young Adolescents: Starting Today to Make a Healthy Tomorrow

Alina L. Flores and Katie P. Kilker

Adolescents who engage in risky sexual behavior and have poor nutrition are at risk for neural tube defect-affected pregnancies. Existing folic acid education efforts, however, are often designed for adult women. To develop a message that is relevant to adolescent audiences, focus groups were conducted with middle school students to assess a draft brochure’s readability, understandability, and visual appeal. This article describes the development of a folic acid educational fact card aimed at young adolescents. The Prevention Research Team of the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed several products to educate the public about folic acid. These materials have been very popular with women over the age of 18, but no suitable material is available for adolescents or, in particular, for younger adolescents. Several partners reported that they had conducted folic acid presentations at middle and high schools in their local areas but did not have an appropriate product to leave with students to help reinforce their message. In response to this deficiency in educational materials, the Prevention Research Team began developing a tool for middle school students. The goal of this tool, a brochure, is to reach a young adolescent audience with the folic acid message to encourage a daily health habit that would carry into later adolescence and adulthood.

