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Hospital Deaths Higher in Uninsured

Having no health insurance might have contributed to nearly 17,000 deaths among hospitalized U.S. children from 1988 to 2005, according to research led by the Johns Hopkins Children's Center. Using more than 23 million hospital records, the investigators compared the risk of death in children who had insurance with that of children without coverage. The uninsured were 60% more likely to die in the hospital. The increased risk persisted regardless of medical condition. The researchers said that their study didn't establish cause and effect despite the powerful link between coverage and mortality risk.

Many Eligible Children Not Insured

Although the number of children without health insurance declined by 800,000 from 2007 to 2008, around 5 million children are eligible today for Medicaid or the

Children's Health Insurance Program but not enrolled, according to the Urban Institute. Those eligible children represent nearly two-thirds of all uninsured children, the policy group said. Streamlining state application and retention processes for the public-insurance programs could increase enrollment among these children, the group said. For example, more than 90% of low-income parents said they would enroll their uninsured child if he or she were eligible. However, half of these parents didn't know their child was eligible, did not know how to apply, or found the application process difficult. The study also recommended that states target outreach efforts to teenagers and Hispanics, both of which are groups with low enrollment rates.

Parents Oppose High-Calorie Snacks

The vast majority of parents want schools to limit students' access to high-

calorie chips, sodas, and candy and to offer them opportunities for physical activity throughout the day, a survey by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation shows. In fact, more than 92% of parents consider physical education and health education as important as English, math, and science lessons. Two-thirds of parents said schools play a major role in instilling healthy habits in children. Eight in 10 parents said they wish to help create a healthier environment in schools. Many said they have done so already by volunteering and bringing in healthy food.

Daily TV Viewing Averages 3 Hours

American children aged 2-11 are watching an average of more than 3 hours of television each day, which represents an 8-year high, the Nielsen Co. reported. Children aged 2-5 spend more than 32 hours a week on average in front of a TV or computer screen. Children aged 6-11 spend a little less time in front of a screen—about 28 hours per week in total—but they spend more time playing video games, the TV-rating service said. Internet use is also higher among these older children: Nearly half of 6- to 11-

year-olds spent time online in August, compared with 20% of younger children.

Teen Parents Defy Stereotypes

While many Americans assume that teenaged parents come from impoverished, single-parent homes, teen pregnancy happens across the socioeconomic spectrum, according to a new analysis. Surveys of middle- and high-school students show that 39% of teens who had ever given birth to or fathered a child as a teenager were living with two biological or adoptive parents before the birth, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy reported. About 72% of teens who had either fathered a child or given birth as a teenager were living in households that were above the federal poverty level. "Despite what many may believe, teen childbearing is not limited to a particular income group or family structure, which means that prevention efforts must be broad in their design and reach," Sarah Brown, CEO of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unintended Pregnancy, said in a statement.

—Jane Anderson

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