



## **A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC**

### *Teaching Good Behavior*

*Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2013*

Recorded: June 17, 2014; posted: June 19, 2014

*[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

When people are young and healthy, they often think they're invincible, but certain behaviors put adolescents at risk for serious health problems.

Dr. Stephanie Zaza is the Director of CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health. She's joining us today to discuss the most common risk behaviors that affect adolescents. Welcome to the show, Stephanie.

[Dr. Zaza] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Stephanie, what are the leading causes of illness and death among young people?

[Dr. Zaza] The most common causes of injury and death are motor vehicle injuries and violence when we're teenagers. In addition, behaviors that start when we're teenagers can cause sickness and death throughout our lives, things like tobacco, alcohol, poor diet, or physical inactivity, and risky sexual behaviors.

[Dr. Gaynes] What encouraging trends are you seeing in monitoring health behaviors in adolescents?

[Dr. Zaza] We were very pleased to see that physical fighting has been cut almost in half, over the last 20 years. And over the last decade, alcohol use has been declining rather rapidly. And cigarette use in this survey was at the lowest level we've ever seen in teenagers.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where there any concerning trends?

[Dr. Zaza] There are some things to be concerned about. Although we're seeing fewer students report that they're currently sexually active, among those students, they're using condoms less, and that leaves them vulnerable to an unintended pregnancy or infection with HIV or a sexually transmitted disease. In addition, although we don't have trends for this, we saw that 41 percent of students who drive reported texting and driving.

[Dr. Gaynes] How is newer technology affecting health behavior in adolescents?

[Dr. Zaza] Well, in addition to texting or e-mailing while driving, which is a new technology that we're recently asking about, we're also concerned about a transition from TV viewing to computer use—all kinds of computers, whether it's smart phones or tablets. We're seeing students reporting three or more hours of computer use a day for non-school work. That's a lot of sedentary behavior. The other new technology that we need to ask about in the future are e-cigarettes. We know that this is becoming a more common behavior among adolescents, and so we'll be asking that in future surveys.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some effective ways to approach young people about these behaviors?

[Dr. Zaza] I think the most important thing is that parents talk with their teenagers about these risks. These are things that we all see and do and it's important to talk and be aware of them and to try to model healthy behaviors, as well. In addition to parents, schools can have an enormous influence, in terms of teaching students about healthy behaviors and making sure that they have time for things like being physically active in school. We know that physically active students are better learners, for example. So these are things that we can do throughout our community—parents, school—to help students be healthier.

[Dr. Gaynes] Stephanie, where can listeners get more information about risk behaviors among adolescents?

[Dr. Zaza] Listeners can go to [cdc.gov/healthyyouth](http://cdc.gov/healthyyouth), all one word.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Stephanie. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Stephanie Zaza about the leading risk behaviors among adolescents.

Remember, if you're a parent or work with youth, you *can* make a difference. Talk with young people about these risky behaviors and emphasize and model a healthy lifestyle.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.