



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Developing Healthy Habits – Part 1

Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 2009

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[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.

A recent CDC study found that many high school students have habits or behaviors that are linked to the leading causes of death among adults.

Dr. Danice Eaton is a research scientist with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of developing healthy habits early in life. Welcome to the show, Danice.

[Dr. Eaton] Thanks for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Danice, what types of risky behaviors are most common among young people?

[Dr. Eaton] Young people are engaging in many risk behaviors that can affect their health later in life. For example, nearly half of high school students have ever smoked cigarettes, about three quarters are not eating enough fruits and vegetables, and over 80 percent did not get enough physical activity.

[Dr. Gaynes] What kinds of health problems can these lead to later in life?

[Dr. Eaton] These behaviors can contribute to chronic diseases in adulthood, the leading causes of illness and death among adults in the United States are cardiovascular disease and cancer. And we know that behavior, such as healthy eating, engaging in physical activity, and choosing not to use tobacco promote long term health and well being.

[Dr. Gaynes] Do certain problem behaviors differ by gender, and are there differences by race or ethnicity?

[Dr. Eaton] Yes. High school girls are most likely to not eat enough fruits and vegetables and to be physically inactive, and we also see that high school girls are more likely than boys to use unhealthy methods to lose weight, such as fasting, taking diet pills, and vomiting. In terms of race/ethnic differences, we do see a difference in physical inactivity. One in three black students are physically inactive, compared to one in five white students, and Hispanic students fall in the middle – about one in four. We also see that black students are most likely to consume soda daily and to not get enough sleep. On the other hand, white and Hispanic students are most likely to not eat enough fruits and vegetables.

[Dr. Gaynes] How have these behaviors evolved or changed over the years?

[Dr. Eaton] We have seen some encouraging progress in recent years for some nutrition-related behaviors. Fewer students are drinking soda daily and fewer students are using unhealthy weight control methods. We are also seeing an increase in the number of students who are consuming recommended amounts of fruit and 100 percent fruit juice. However, despite this progress, it's important to remember that we still have a long way to go, with nearly 78 percent of high school students not eating enough fruits and vegetables and 82 percent not getting enough physical activity.

[Dr. Gaynes] What can parents and schools do to promote healthy behavior among young people?

[Dr. Eaton] Well, parents can promote healthy behaviors by encouraging their teenager to get enough sleep and exercise and to eat healthy, balanced meals. Schools also do play an important role in promoting healthy behaviors. Students should have opportunities to participate in quality physical education classes at school and they should have access to healthy food and beverages at school. And school health education curriculum should be designed to teach students how to be physically active and eat healthy and should emphasize the long term health benefits of those behaviors.

[Dr. Gaynes] Danice, where can listeners get more information about promoting healthy behavior among young people?

[Dr. Eaton] They can go to www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth, and that's all one word.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Danice. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Danice Eaton about the importance of developing healthy habits early in life.

Remember, developing good habits, such as a healthy diet, regular exercise, and abstaining from tobacco use, can lead to a longer, healthier life.

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 or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.