



National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Newsletter

September 2019

Welcome to the NCHS Monthly Newsletter for Partners and External Stakeholders. This monthly newsletter will keep you informed about activities at NCHS, recent publications, and NCHS in the news. Please send all questions and feedback to Lisa Wagner (LWagner2@cdc.gov).

Special Topic: Prescription Drugs

Monitoring the use of prescription drugs tells us about an aspect of the health of the U.S. population of growing importance. Differences in the most commonly used prescription drug types by age group reflect differences in the prevalence of health conditions at various stages of life. Changing trends in prescription drug use over time may be influenced by changing disease prevalence and diagnosis, changing treatment recommendations, and decline in the use of inappropriate or ineffective therapies.

NCHS monitors the use of prescription drugs across many of its surveys, including [the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey \(NHANES\)](#), [the National Health Interview Survey \(NHIS\)](#), and [the National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey \(NHAMCS\)](#).

In the 2015 – 2016 NHANES, [45.8% of the U.S. population used prescription drugs in the past 30 days](#). Prescription drug use was highest among non-Hispanic white persons followed by non-Hispanic black persons, and lowest among non-Hispanic Asian and Hispanic persons. The most commonly used types of drugs included bronchodilators for ages 0–11 years, central nervous system stimulants for ages 12–19, antidepressants for ages 20–59, and lipid-lowering drugs for ages 60 and over. Recent findings released from the same NHANES survey data showed that nearly [7 in 10 adults aged 40–79 used at least 1 prescription drug in the past 30 days in the United States \(69.0%\) and Canada \(65.5%\)](#), and around 1 in 5 used at least 5 prescription drugs (22.4% in the United States and 18.8% in Canada).

A series of data briefs from the NHIS highlight the strategies used by adults to reduce their prescription drug costs. These briefs examined strategies among [adults aged 18 – 64](#), [adults aged 65 and over](#), and [adults with diagnosed diabetes](#). Strategies used by adults to reduce their prescription drug costs include asking their doctor for lower-cost medication, not taking the medication as prescribed, and using alternative therapies.

Recent and Upcoming Publications

Released in August 2019:

Title	Summary
Infant Mortality in the United States, 2017: Data from the Period Linked Birth/Infant Death File	A total of 22,341 infant deaths were reported in the United States in 2017. The U.S. infant mortality rate was 5.79 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, not statistically different from the rate of 5.87 in 2016.
Urban-Rural Differences in Drug Overdose Death Rates, by Sex, Age, and Type of Drugs Involved, 2017	The rate of drug overdose deaths was higher in urban than in rural counties. Rates were higher in rural than in urban counties for drug overdose deaths involving

	natural and semisynthetic opioids, and psychostimulants with abuse potential.
Prescription Drug Use Among Adults Aged 40 – 79 in the United States and Canada	Nearly 7 in 10 adults aged 40–79 used at least 1 prescription drug in the past 30 days in the United States (69.0%) and Canada (65.5%), and around 1 in 5 used at least 5 prescription drugs (22.4% in the United States and 18.8% in Canada).
Secondhand Smoke Exposure Among Nonsmoking Youth, United States 2013 – 2016	In 2013–2016, more than one-third (35.4%) of U.S. nonsmoking youth aged 3–17 years were exposed to secondhand smoke (SHS) from tobacco, as measured by cotinine in the blood. A higher percentage of non-Hispanic black (61.8%) youth was exposed to SHS compared with non-Hispanic white (34.3%), non-Hispanic Asian (18.3%), and Hispanic (24.9%) youth.
Strategies Used by Adults with Diagnosed Diabetes to Reduce Their Prescription Drug Costs, 2017 – 2018	Adults under age 65 with diagnosed diabetes were more likely than those aged 65 and over to not take their medication as prescribed and to ask their doctor for a lower-cost medication. Among adults aged 65 and over with diagnosed diabetes, the percentage who asked their doctor for a lower-cost medication was lowest among those with Medicare and Medicaid coverage.
Percentage of office-based physicians using any electronic health record (EHR) system and physicians that have an EHR system	This table reports the use of EHRs by physician specialty and age as well as practice size, ownership, location and additional practice characteristics.

Upcoming Releases in September 2019:

Release Date	Title
9/4/2019	Quarterly Provisional Estimates for Selected Birth Indicators: Q1 2018 – Q1 2019
9/4/2019	Quarterly Provisional Estimates of Infant Mortality: 2016 – Q3 2018
9/5/2019	Mortality Patterns Between the 5 States with the Highest Death Rates and the 5 States with the Lowest Death Rates in the United States, 2017
9/17/2019	Cognitive Performance in Adults Aged 60 Years of Age and Over: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2011 – 2014
9/20/2019	Characteristics of Asthma Visits to Physician Offices in the United States: 2012 – 2015 National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey
9/24/2019	Trends in Apolipoprotein B, non-High Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol, and Low Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol for Adults 20 Years and Older in the U.S., 2005–2016
9/25/2019	Maternal Characteristics and Infant Outcomes in Appalachia and the Delta

Key Public Meetings and Conferences

1. [The NCHS Board of Scientific Counselors will hold its next full meeting, open to the public, on September 5 – 6](#), at the NCHS offices in Hyattsville, MD. The agenda will include an update from the NCHS Acting Director, Jennifer Madans, discussion on data modernization, a presentation on NHANES response rates, and updates on the NCHS Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Trust Fund Projects.

2. NCHS participated at several meetings in August, including the National Academies of Sciences Public Workshop of the Committee on Best Practices for Assessing Mortality and Significant Morbidity Following Large-Scale Disasters and the National Academy for State Health Policy Annual Meeting.

Congressional and Budget News

Briefing to Congressional Staffers on Trends in Methamphetamine Deaths

NCHS participated in an HHS briefing to staffers from the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control on the trends in methamphetamine deaths. [Provisional drug overdose estimates](#) predict that the number of drug overdose deaths involving psychostimulants (e.g. methamphetamine) in 2018 may be slightly higher than drug overdose deaths involving natural and semisynthetic opioids (e.g. oxycodone, hydrocodone). In 2017, the eight states with rates of drug overdose deaths involving psychostimulants of 6.0 per 100,000 or above were West Virginia (13.6), Alaska (9.1), Arizona (8.5), Nevada (8.3), New Mexico (8.2), Kentucky (8.0), Oklahoma (7.2) and Utah (6.8).

Briefing to Congressional Staffers on Food Allergy Prevalence Data

NCHS participated in an HHS briefing to staffers from Congresswoman Doris Matsui and Senator Tim Scott's offices on comments about food allergy prevalence data collection. These data have historically been collected by the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (last collection in 2005-06) and the National Health Interview Survey. In 2017, [6.5% of U.S. children under age 18 had a reported food allergy](#).

NCHS in the News

Bloomberg: [Pill Poppers Are Just as Common in Canada as America: Survey](#)

NPR: ["Cadillac Tax" On Generous Health Plans May Be Headed For Repeal](#)

The Herald Bulletin: [More seniors, families opting for long-term care at home](#)

The Philadelphia Tribune: [Over a third of American kids who don't smoke are exposed to it anyways, study finds. Most are below the poverty line.](#)

Physician's Weekly: [Women With Diabetes More Likely Than Men to Not Take Meds As Prescribed](#)