

Health Briefs

by LAURIE LARSON
News Writer

Teen tobacco use

About one-third of U.S. high-school-age adolescents smoke or use smokeless tobacco, according to a recent Surgeon General's report.

More than 3 million U.S. adolescents smoke cigarettes; and more than 1 million adolescent males use smokeless tobacco, Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, M.D., FAAP, stated in her report, *Preventing Tobacco Use Among Young People*.

Among addictive behaviors, smoking is most likely to begin during adolescence, usually by age 16, Dr. Elders reported. Most teen smokers have tried cigarettes or chewing tobacco before high-school graduation; and most report that they are addicted to nicotine and cannot quit, the report stated.

Peer pressure, poverty, poor school achievement, low self-esteem and cigarette advertising contribute to adolescent tobacco use, the report stated.

Teen tobacco use would be cut by increasing tobacco taxes, enforcing tobacco-purchase age restrictions, launching youth-oriented, anti-tobacco media campaigns and providing school-based prevention programs, the report recommended.

To receive a copy of the report, request publication #S/N 017-001-00491-0. Copies cost \$19, including postage and handling. Contact: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402-9328, or fax requests to (202) 512-2250.



Jerry Dallego

Pertussis on the rise

The number of pertussis cases reported to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) increased 82 percent from 1992 to 1993, according to a study in the Dec. 17 *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*.

CDC received reports of 5,457

A recent report states that about one-third of U.S. high-school-age teens smoke or use smokeless tobacco.

pertussis cases between Jan. 3 and Dec. 4, 1993, compared to 3,004 cases in 1992. The figures represent the highest annual number of cases reported since 1967, according to the study. Reported cases increased most in New England,

the Mid-Atlantic, North Central and Mountain regions, with large pertussis outbreaks occurring in Chicago and Cincinnati, researchers stated.

Of 4,989 cases in which age was known, 44.4 percent occurred in infants younger than 1 year, 20.7 percent occurred in children between the ages of 1 year and 4 years, 11.3 percent occurred in those ages 5 years to 9 years, and 23.6 percent were reported in children age 10 years and older.

Infants younger than 6 months and undervaccinated preschool-age children are at greatest risk for severe pertussis-related complications, MMWR researchers stated. Approximately 50 percent of preschool-age children diagnosed with pertussis in 1993 were undervaccinated, MMWR researchers reported.

Uninsured children lack medical care

Children without health insurance are less likely to receive medical care when needed than insured peers, according to a report in the May 19 *New England Journal of Medicine*.

In a study of 7,578 children and

adolescents, uninsured children were less likely to receive medical care from physicians, researchers reported. Researchers included Jeffrey Stoddard, M.D., FAAP, an assistant professor of general pediatrics and adolescent medicine in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Wisconsin Medical School in Madison.

Researchers studied children's access to care for treatment of pharyngitis, asthma, and acute or recurrent ear infections.

Socioeconomic status, family size, sex, ethnic group, or rural or urban life were found not to significantly impact patients' access to physicians, researchers stated.

Pediatric dosage database

The United States Pharmacopeia (USP) plans to augment pediatric drug-use and dosage information within its drug-information (DI) database, USP officials reported.

Pediatric anesthesiology drug-guidelines and use-precautions will be integrated first into the USP DI database, followed by similar drug-use and dosage information for pediatric oncology, gastroenterology and infectious diseases, USP officials reported.

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