

PRIORITY HEALTH-RISK BEHAVIORS OF YOUTH AND ADOLESCENTS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) addresses *six priority health-risk behaviors* of youth that research shows contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among adults and youth. These behaviors are usually established during childhood, and are preventable. In addition to causing serious health problems, these behaviors also contribute to educational and social problems.²³ These six priority health-risk behaviors are: alcohol and other drug use, behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence (including suicide), tobacco use, unhealthy dietary behaviors, physical inactivity and sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. The health-risk behaviors are described below.

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a nationwide survey produced by the CDC Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) to monitor the prevalence of these priority health-risk behaviors among samples of high school students. In 2009, Kentucky was one of 14 states who administered a middle school YRBS to students in grades 6-8. Over time, trends are developed from the surveys which provide information about whether the percentage of students who are engaging in specific health-risk behaviors is increasing, decreasing or staying the same. For more information about understanding trend data go to: http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/pdf/YRBS_trend_interpretation.pdf For information on Kentucky YRBS data and trends go to: <http://www.education.ky.gov/kde/administrative+resources/coordinated+school+health/youth+risk+behavior+survey.htm>

1. Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Alcohol is used by more young people in the United States than tobacco or illicit drugs, and is a factor in approximately 41% of all deaths from motor vehicle crashes.

2. Behaviors that Contribute to Unintentional Injuries and Violence (including suicide)

Injury and violence is the leading cause of death among youth aged 10-24 years: motor vehicle crashes (30% of all deaths), all other unintentional injuries (15%), homicide (15%), and suicide (12%).

3. Tobacco Use

Each day in the United States, approximately 3,600 adolescents aged 12-17 try their first cigarette. Each year cigarette smoking accounts for approximately 1 of every 5 deaths, or about 443,000 people. Cigarette smoking results in 5.1 million years of potential life lost in the United States annually.

4. Unhealthy Dietary Behaviors

Healthy eating is associated with reduced risk for many diseases, including the three leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, and stroke. In 2009, only 22.3% of high school students reported eating fruits and vegetables five or more times daily during the past 7 days.

Youth Online

Youth Online allows you to analyze national, state, and local Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System data from 1991-2009. Data from high school and middle school surveys are included. You can filter and sort on the basis of race/ethnicity, sex, grade, or site, create customized tables and graphs, and perform statistical tests by site and health topic. This is provided by CDC-DASH.

<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx>

5. Physical Inactivity

Participation in physical activity declines as children get older. Overall, in 2009, 18% of high school students had participated in at least 60 minutes per day of physical activity on each of the seven days before the survey.

6. Sexual Behaviors that Contribute to Unintended Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), including HIV

Each year, there are approximately 19 million new STD infections in the United States, and almost half of them are among youth aged 15 to 24. In 2009, 34% of currently sexually active high school students did not use a condom during their last sexual intercourse.

