



Facts & Figures: Girls Health Statistics Across the Nation

A staggering amount of statistics pertaining to girls health have been released by top federal agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the National Cancer Institute (NCI), among others. Below is a sample of girls' health statistics in our country.

Girls and...

Alcohol...

- ❖ Ten percent of girls ages 12-17 admit to binge drinking (having five or more drinks on the same occasion at least once in the month prior to survey).
- ❖ Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is a cause of lung cancer and coronary heart disease among women who are lifetime nonsmokers.

Body Image...

- ❖ 81% of 10 year olds are afraid of being fat. 51% of 9 and 10-year-old girls feel better about themselves if they are on a diet. (Mellin et. al, 1992)
- ❖ In girls, the mortality rate for anorexia is higher than any other psychological disorder. In fact, it's the number one cause of death among young women. Five to 10% of girls with anorexia die within ten years of onset, 18-20% die within twenty years of onset, and only 50% report ever being cured. (ANAD)
- ❖ In 2001, 62.1% of ninth-grade girls reported attempting to lose weight compared with 31.8% of ninth-grade boys.
- ❖ High school girls (12.6%) were significantly more likely than boys (5.5%) to have taken diet pills, powders, or liquids during the previous month to lose weight. In addition, high school girls were significantly more likely (7.8%) than boys (2.9%) to have taken laxatives or vomited to lose weight or avoid gaining weight.
- ❖ High school girls (34.9%) were significantly more likely than boys (23.3%) to think that they were overweight. (that doesn't look like a significant difference) But they were more than twice as likely (62.3%) as boys (28.8%) to be currently trying to lose weight.



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- ❖ Girls who are involved in sports are less likely to consider themselves overweight. In 2000, 27% of female athletes thought they were overweight, compared with 40% of non-athletic girls.

Drug Use...

- ❖ 20.5% of girls ages 12-17 reported using illicit drugs over the past year (these drugs could have included Marijuana/Hash, Cocaine/Crack, Inhalants, Hallucinogens, Heroin and/or any prescription-type psychotherapeutic used for non-medical purposes).
- ❖ Marijuana has been tried by more than one-fifth of adolescent females.
- ❖ The largest reported use of both cocaine and crack was among Hispanic females.
- ❖ Among teens with more than \$50.00 a week in spending money, girls are more likely than boys to smoke, drink, get drunk and use marijuana.
- ❖ Half of teens that had not tried marijuana credited their parents with their decision. Parent power is the most underutilized tool in battling teen substance abuse.
- ❖ Girls' ages 13 to 15 are at a higher risk of substance abuse.
- ❖ Girls with \$50.00 or more in weekly spending money are more likely than boys to have used marijuana (43% vs. 25%), tobacco (38% vs. 31%) and alcohol (63% vs. 58%) and to get drunk in a typical month (32% vs. 22%).
- ❖ More than one quarter (27.7 %) of high school girls currently smoke cigarettes, 45% drink alcohol, more than a quarter (26.4%) binge drink and 20% use marijuana. Younger girls are smoking and drinking like boys.
- ❖ High school girls are almost as likely as boys to use cocaine and inhalants.
- ❖ Substance use can sink into abuse and addiction more quickly for girls and young women than for boys and young men, even when using the same amount or less of a particular substance.
- ❖ Girls using alcohol and drugs are more likely to attempt suicide.
- ❖ Girls are more likely than boys to abuse prescription painkillers, stimulants and tranquilizers.





Learning Disabilities & Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)...

- ❖ An estimated 4.6 million children 3-17 years of age had a learning disability and an estimated 3.3 million children had ADHD. Girls were half as likely to have a learning disability as boys and 3 times less likely to have ADHD than boys.

Media...

- ❖ By the time a teenage girl graduates high school, she will have spent 15,000 hours watching television, compared to 12,000 hours in the classroom.
- ❖ Average time per week that the American child ages 2-17 spends watching television: 19 hours, 40 minutes.
- ❖ Teenage boys spend nearly twice as much time watching MTV as reading for pleasure. Girls ages 11-19 watch MTV more than any other network.
- ❖ Nearly 30 percent of young people (ages 10-17) say they watch shows their parents would not approve of.
- ❖ 34% of women and 30% of men on TV are shown using their intelligence. Furthermore, 24% of women use their intelligence to achieve their goals, compared to 14% of men. In movies, 69% of women and 71% of men are seen as behaving with intelligence.
- ❖ Across the media, women are seen in context of romantic relationships more frequently than men and in the context of work less frequently than men. In television, 23% of women were shown dating as compared to only 17% of men. On TV, 28% of women were shown on the job while 41% of men were depicted this way.
- ❖ 46% of women in the media are depicted as “thin” or “very thin”.
- ❖ 37% of articles in teen magazines included a focus on appearance.
- ❖ 56% of girls ages 10-17 think there are enough good role models on television.
- ❖ Both girls (62%) and boys (58%) say the female characters they see on television usually rely on someone else to solve their problems, whereas male characters tend to solve their own problems (53% of girls and 50% of boys agree).
- ❖ 7 out of 10 (69%) girls - and 40% of boys - say they have wanted to look like, dress, or fix their hair like a character on television.



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- ❖ Girls between 10 and 17 spend most of their time listening to CDs and tapes (50% very often), listening to the radio (46% very often), and watching television programs (32% very often).

Nutrition...

- ❖ Unfortunately, most girls do not meet calcium recommendations. National nutrition surveys show that only 19% of teen girls get the recommended amounts of calcium. In fact, teenage girls only average about 740 mg of calcium per day, well below the amount needed for their normal growth and development.
- ❖ Of daily soda drinkers, 25% of 13- to 18-year-old girls drink 3.5 cans and 10% drink five cans or more, and. By contrast, 20 years ago, the typical boy or girl consumer of soft drinks (at the 50th percentile) drank only two-thirds of a can per day. That is nearly a 400% increase!
- ❖ Girls average 1 1/2 cup of soft drinks and less than 1 cup of milk daily. Heavy consumption of soft drinks is associated with low intake of calcium, magnesium, ascorbic acid, riboflavin, and vitamin A and with high intake of calories, fat, and carbohydrate. It is a likely factor in the increase in obesity for both children and adults.
- ❖ 70.6% of female high school students report eating a low-fat diet. Black, non-Hispanic students (54.9%) were less likely to eat a low-fat diet than their White, non-Hispanic (62.9%) and Hispanic (63.8%) peers.
- ❖ In 2001, only one fifth (21.4%) of students, reported eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables in the previous day, an increase from 15.4% in 1993.
- ❖ Blood pressure levels were higher for Black girls ages 6-24 than for their White and Mexican-American peers due to higher levels of dietary fat intake as well as a higher Body Mass Index rating.
- ❖ Nutrition Trends: In America there are fewer family meals and less time is spent eating food together; Less than 10% of household budget spent on food kept in the home; Increase in size and availability of all-you-can-eat and super-size servings at restaurants; Over half of fast food goes out drive-thru windows; More food sold in single-serve packs means not sharing meals; Liter of Coke costs less than half-gallon of milk.



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Obesity...

- ❖ African American, non-Hispanic girls are at particularly high risk of being overweight. In 1999-2000, 24-27% of African American, non-Hispanic girls were overweight.
- ❖ Overweight or obese children have been being reported more heavily since the mid-1970s. It is estimated that over 13% of children ages 6-11 and 14% of adolescents' ages 12-19 are overweight.

Physical Activity/Sports...

- ❖ 38% of female high school students reported a level of physical activity that did not meet the criteria of the recommended amount of either moderate or vigorous physical activity.
- ❖ Young females are more likely than males to be more inactive.
- ❖ After the tenth grade, girls are significantly more likely than boys to report not engaging in vigorous or moderate physical activity (14.4% of eleventh-grade girls versus 7.8% of boys, and 15.2% of twelfth-grade girls versus 8.7% of boys). Among high school girls, African Americans (16.9%) are significantly more likely than whites (10.2%) to report inactivity.
- ❖ A girl's involvement in sports can reduce her chances of contemplating suicide or developing a suicide plan. When asked about suicide plans, 23% of non-athletes, 18% of athletes, and 14% of highly involved athletes had made a suicide plan.

Pregnancy...

- ❖ In the United States each year, nearly 4 in 10 young women—nearly 1 million a year—become pregnant at least once before they reach the age of 20. Eighty percent of these pregnancies are unintended, and 79% are to unmarried teens.
- ❖ In 2001, the adolescent birth rate was 25 per 1,000 young women ages 15 to 17. There were 145,324 births to these young women in 2001.
- ❖ There are substantial racial and ethnic disparities in birth rates among adolescents ages 15 to 17. In 2001, the birth rate for this age group was 10 per 1,000 for Asians/Pacific Islanders; 14 for White, non-Hispanics; 31 for American Indians/Alaska Natives; 45 for African American, non-Hispanics; and 53 for Hispanics.
- ❖ The birth rate for African American, non-Hispanic females ages 15 to 17 dropped by nearly half between 1991 and 2001, completely reversing the increase between 1986



- ❖ and 1991. The birth rate for White, non-Hispanic teens declined by two-fifths between 1991-2001.
- ❖ In 2001, 88% of births to females ages 15 to 17 were to unmarried mothers, compared with 62% in 1980.
- ❖ Hispanic females ages 15-17 reported 61% of births among females in that age group. That figure is 3 times the rate of non-Hispanic white girls.

Suicide/Depression...

- ❖ The most recent statistics report that 23.6% of female students in grades 9-12 have seriously considered suicide, 11.2% have attempted suicide, and 3.1% have suffered injuries due to a suicide attempt.
- ❖ Ethnically, the largest groups of female high school students who think about suicide are Hispanic (26%). The most common reasons for attempted suicide or suicidal thoughts were knowledge of suicide attempt by friend or family member; a history of mental and behavioral problems requiring professional help; and extreme alienation from family and community.
- ❖ Stress and depression are related to smoking and drinking for girls. In the most recent survey measuring stress and smoking among girls, when asked why they smoked or drank, 66% of girls who reported smoking said they did so to relieve stress, and 36% who reported drinking said they did so because it helped them to forget problems. Girls with depressive symptoms or who reported abuse were even more likely to turn to drinking or smoking for relief.
- ❖ Girls in ninth through twelfth grade (34.5%) are significantly more likely than boys in the same grades (21.6%) to have felt sad or hopeless almost every day for at least 2 weeks.

Sexual Behavior...

- ❖ Among female high school students, 67% of African American adolescent females reported having ever had sexual intercourse—with 11% reporting their first sexual experience before age 13. 70% of all Asian and Pacific Islander high school students reported being virgins.
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- ❖ Teen girls were, on average, 1.7 years younger than their partners. 51% of teen girls had a first sexual partner who was 2 or more years older, and 23% had a partner who was one year older. About 1/5 of all teenage girls surveyed had a partner who was older by 4 or more years.
- ❖ Among teen girls who first had sex before age 14, 65% had a partner at least two years older while only 17% boys of the same age had partners that age.
- ❖ 17% of Hispanic teens encountered physical violence in their first sexual relationships compared to 6% non-Hispanic whites and 12% non-Hispanic African Americans.
- ❖ 62% of teen girls were more likely to say they had had a conversation with their partner about contraception prior to the first sexual experience—white teen girls being the most likely race to say they had this conversation.
- ❖ Hispanic teens were less vigilant users of contraceptives. More than 1/3 never used contraception during their first sexual relationship (23% of non-Hispanic blacks and 19% of non-Hispanic whites claimed this statistic).

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS...

- ❖ Currently there are over 143,000 people infected with AIDS in the United States. Over 1,800 of those infected are girls ages 13-19. African American females are the largest group.
- ❖ Chlamydia is the most frequently reported bacterial sexually transmitted disease in the United States. It causes an estimated 3 million infections annually.
- ❖ Chlamydia is known as a "silent" disease because three quarters of infected girls have no symptoms.

Smoking...

- ❖ Among female students who reported smoking daily in 2002, 5% were 8th-graders, 11% were 10th-graders, and 16% were 12th-graders.
- ❖ On average, more girls (13.6%) between the ages of 12-17 years old smoke than do boys (12.4%) of the same age. This is the only age group where the female smoker population is higher than the male population.
- ❖ Smoking prevalence for high school senior girls is highest among American Indians or Alaska Natives (39.4%) and whites (33.1%) and lowest among Hispanics (19.2%), Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders (13.8%), and African Americans (8.6%).



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- ❖ Large majorities of both white and Hispanic (71% each) and African American (69%) of adolescent females reported that they had tried cigarette smoking even if only one or two puffs.

Violence...

- ❖ Each year, there are nearly 3.5 million violent crimes committed against females aged 12 and older. Females are most likely to be victimized by people they know.
- ❖ 1.3% of all violent crimes committed against women were committed against girls ages 12-15.
- ❖ Hispanic girls reported the largest incidents of forceful sexual intercourse compared to African American and white females.
- ❖ Female high school students were more than twice as likely than male students to report forced sexual intercourse.

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