Overview

The CDC's **National Center for Health Statistics** (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions. These health statistics allow us to:

- Document the health status of the U.S. population and selected subgroups.
- Identify disparities in health status and use of health care by race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, region, and other population characteristics.
- Document access to the health care system.
- Monitor trends in health status and health care delivery.
- Identify health behaviors and associated risk factors.
- Support biomedical and health services research.
- Provide data to support public policies and programs.
- Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of health policies and programs.

Health Topics Addressed by NCHS

NCHS produces data on a wide range of health indicators such as:

- Health insurance coverage and its relationship to access and utilization of health care services.
- Exposure to environmental chemicals.
- Prevalence of obesity and overweight among the U.S. population.
- Patterns and relationships of risk factors to specific diseases and populations.
- Nutrition and physical activity.
- Growth charts to monitor the development of children.
- Health status, health-related behaviors and risk factors.
- Key health indicators such as infant mortality, life expectancy, and teen births.
- Emergency department use and capacity to measure bioterrorism preparedness.
- Practice of medicine in the U.S., the increasing use of prescription drugs, evolution of roles and practices of health care providers, and changes in institutions and health plans.

NCHS Data Sources

Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides multiple perspectives to help us understand the population's health, influences on health, and health outcomes. Sources of data collection include:

- Birth and death certificates
- Medical records
- Personal interviews
- Standardized physical and dental examinations
- Laboratory test results

For further information about NCHS and its programs, visit us at **http://www.cdc.gov/nchs,** or call the Office of Planning, Budget and Legislation at 301-458-4100.