

First Look: U.S. Youth and Seizures

CDC issues first national report on seizures in children

Nearly 1 in 100 children and adolescents in the United States have seizures, according to the first national study to look at seizures, co-occurring conditions, household income, and access to healthcare for children and teens between the ages of 6 and 17 years.



CDC researchers reviewed data from the 2010-2014 National Health Interview Survey, an ongoing annual, nationally-representative household survey of the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population.

According to parents' reports, 336,000 or 0.7% of U.S. children aged 6–17 were affected by at least one seizure during the past year. There are many causes of seizures, such as head injuries, infections, and epilepsy.

Key findings:

- Children with seizures were more likely to live in poverty and low-income households compared to children without seizures (41.6% vs. 28.6%).
- More than a third of children with seizures (34.4%) had not been seen by a medical specialist during the past 12 months.

- Children with seizures were more than two times more likely to visit an emergency department in the past year compared to children without seizures (41% vs 15.4%).
- Children with seizures were more likely to have co-occurring conditions (such as headaches/migraines, ADHD/ADD, or learning disabilities) and have unmet social and health care needs in comparison to those without seizures.
- Children with seizures more often missed six or more school days in the past year than those without seizures.

“We must raise awareness about seizures in children, particularly among parents and school personnel, and link families of children with seizures to appropriate care and services,” said Wayne Giles, M.D., director of CDC’s Division of Population Health.

“It’s imperative that we remove the barriers that stand between these children and the medical care they need.”

For more information on seizures and epilepsy: www.cdc.gov/epilepsy.

