

Findings from the *CDC Health Disparities and Inequalities Report – United States, 2011*

In recent decades, the United States has made substantial progress in improving our residents' health and reducing disparities, but ongoing economic, racial/ethnic, and other social disparities in health still exist.

Now, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued the *CDC Health Disparities and Inequalities Report – United States, 2011*, which is the first in a series of regular reports that focus on selected topics that are important to CDC's efforts to eliminate disparities.

Released as an *MMWR Supplement*, the report contains 22 topical essays that address disparities in health-care access, exposure to environmental hazards, mortality, morbidity, behavioral risk factors, and social determinants of selected health problems at the national level. The report provides an analysis of the recent trends and ongoing variations in health disparities and inequalities in selected social and health indicators. The data highlight the considerable and persistent gaps between the healthiest people and the least healthy. By documenting these gaps, CDC hopes to spur further action and attention to these issues at the federal, state and local levels.

This fact sheet presents information on disparities in binge drinking, a harmful pattern of alcohol consumption defined as having four or more drinks for a woman and five or more drinks for a man on one or more occasions during the past month.

Key Findings in Binge Drinking Disparities

- Binge drinking is common among U.S. adults, especially among males, persons aged 18–34 years, whites, and those with annual household incomes \geq \$50,000.
- After adjustment for sex and age, the highest average number of binge drinking episodes during the preceding 30 days (4.9) was reported by binge drinkers whose household income was $<$ \$15,000.
- The average largest number of drinks consumed by binge drinkers (8.4) was reported by American Indians/Alaska Natives.

What Can Be Done

Implementing effective population-based strategies to prevent binge drinking (e.g., those recommended by *The Guide to Community Preventive Services* — increasing alcohol excise taxes, regulating alcohol outlet density, and enforcing age 21 years as the minimum legal drinking age) are needed. Screening and counseling for alcohol misuse among adults, including binge drinking, also should be implemented, as recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. The frequency and intensity of binge drinking also should be monitored routinely to guide development and evaluation of culturally appropriate binge drinking prevention and intervention strategies for groups at greater risk.



What Can Be Done, continued

CDC will accelerate its efforts to eliminate health disparities with a focus on surveillance, analysis, and reporting of disparities and the identification and application of evidence-based strategies to achieve health equity.

CDC and its partners can use the findings in this periodic report to raise awareness and understanding of groups that experience the greatest health disparities. The findings also can help motivate increased efforts to intervene at the state, tribal, and local levels to address health disparities and inequalities.

Recommended Actions to Reduce Health Disparities

1. Increase community awareness of disparities as persistent problems that represent some of the most pressing health challenges in the U.S.
2. Set priorities among disparities to be addressed at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels
3. Articulate valid reasons to expend resources to reduce and ultimately eliminate priority disparities
4. Implement the dual strategy of universal and targeted intervention strategies based on lessons learned from successes in reducing certain disparities (e.g., the virtual elimination of disparities in certain vaccination rates among children)
5. Aim to achieve a faster rate of improvement among vulnerable groups by allocating resources in proportion to need and a commitment to closing gaps in health, longevity, and quality of life



For More Information

The *CDC Health Disparities and Inequalities Report – United States, 2011* is available online at www.cdc.gov/mmwr. For more information about this topic, please visit www.cdc.gov/alcohol/.