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children's health

Survey: Obesity Top Kids' Health Issue

Adults See Childhood Obesity, Drug Abuse, and Smoking as Top 3 Concerns

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WebMD Health News

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July 14, 2008 -- What would you say are the biggest problems facing our children today? A new survey of adults -- including those with and without children -- shows that childhood obesity is the No. 1 one health concern.

The survey was conducted in April of this year among 2,064 adults. They were given twenty different health concerns and asked to rate which ones were a "big problem."

Here is the top ten list of biggest health concerns for children in 2008, from the University of Michigan's C.S. Mott Children's Hospital's National Poll on Children's Health:

1. childhood obesity
2. drug abuse
3. smoking
4. bullying
5. Internet safety
6. child abuse and neglect
7. teen pregnancy
8. alcohol abuse
9. ADHD, sexually transmitted infection (tied)
10. chemicals in the environment

Thirty-five percent of adults surveyed ranked childhood obesity as a "big problem" for today's children. How does that differ from last year? Obesity ranked as the third in the 2007 poll.

"The National Poll on Children's Health report clearly shows that adults in America are very concerned about the problem of childhood obesity and its causes," says Matthew M. Davis, MD, in a news release.

Davis is the poll's director. "While recent studies have suggested that the childhood obesity epidemic may be leveling off, the results of this poll reveal that adults in the U.S. are still very much concerned about this issue."

Among the African-American community, teen pregnancy was considered the top health concern, with 35% of respondents saying it was a big problem, compared to 33% of Hispanics and 21% of whites.

Here is more of the breakdown among ethnic groups surveyed:

Drug abuse:

- 50% of Hispanics said it was a big problem
- 35% of African American participants
- 29% of whites

Adults in the lower income bracket ranked drug abuse as a greater concern than wealthy and middle class participants.

In 2007 cigarette smoking was viewed as the biggest concern for children. 52% of Hispanic participants rated it as their major concern.

Researchers say this was the first year that both bullying, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), and chemicals in the environment made the top ten list.

Bullying:

Bullying seemed to be more on the radar for middle class participants -- more so than lower or higher income families.

Parents and people without kids at home rated it as a big problem.

ADHD:

ADHD, or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, was a much greater concern among adults belonging to low-income and middle-income households than adults from households with high-incomes.

Twenty-one percent of adults polled rated it as a top health concern for kids.

Internet safety:

The higher the income, it seems the greater the concern about keeping kids safe while they surf the Internet.

People with household incomes of \$100,000 or more a year were more likely to view Internet safety as a big problem for children in their community.

Twenty-seven percent of survey participants overall said Internet safety is a big health concern for kids.

Chemicals in the environment:

Researchers say responses from adults from low-income households and Hispanics added this issue to the top ten list.

More than 30% of Hispanic adults worried about toxic chemicals in their environment.

25% of adults in the lowest income group were worried about noxious chemicals.

Adults who did not have children living in their home were more likely to rate drug abuse, smoking, Internet safety, and sexually transmitted infection as high concerns, more often than parents did.

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