

Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program covered more than 42 million children in 2010 who otherwise would not have health care access, over a million U.S. children are unable to get needed medical care because their families cannot afford it.

- **Prenatal and perinatal care.** Ten to 25% of women do not receive prenatal care during the first trimester. In addition, a significant percentage of women continue to smoke, use illicit drugs, and consume alcohol during pregnancy.
- **Preterm births.** The incidence of preterm births (<37 weeks) peaked in 2006 and has been slowly declining (11.99% in 2010). However, the 2010 rates of low birth weight infants ( $\leq 2500$  g [8.15% of all births]) and very low birth weight infants ( $\leq 1500$  g [1.45% of all births]) are essentially unchanged since 2006.
- **Birth rate in adolescents.** The national birth rate among adolescents has been steadily dropping since 1990, reaching its lowest rate (34.2 per 1000) for 15- to 19-year-old adolescents in 2010.
- **Adolescent abortions.** In 2009 nearly 800,000 abortions were reported to the CDC, a continued decline over the last decade. Adolescents from 15 to 19 years of age accounted for 15.5% of abortions. Approximately 60% of sexually active adolescents report using effective contraception.
- **Infant mortality.** Although infant mortality rates have declined since 1960, the disparity among the ethnic groups persists. In 2011 the overall infant mortality rate was 6.05 per 1000 live births with a rate per 1000 live births of 5.05 for non-Hispanic whites, 5.27 for Hispanic infants, and 11.42 for black infants. In 2008 the United States ranked thirty-first in infant mortality. Marked variations in infant mortality exist by state with highest mortality rates in the South and Midwest.
- **Initiation and maintenance of breastfeeding.** Seventy-seven percent of women initiate breastfeeding following the birth of their infants. Breastfeeding rates vary by ethnicity (higher rates in non-Hispanic whites and Hispanic mothers) and education (highest in women with a bachelor's degree or higher). Only 47% of women continue breastfeeding for 6 months, with about 25% continuing at 12 months.
- **Cause of death in U.S. children.** The overall causes of death in all children (1 to 24 years of age) in the United States in 2010, in order of frequency, were accidents (unintentional injuries), assaults (homicide), suicide, malignant neoplasms, and congenital malformations (Table 1-1). There was a slight improvement in the rate of death from all causes.
- **Hospital admissions for children and adolescents.** In 2010 2.4% of children were admitted to a hospital at least once. Respiratory illnesses (asthma, pneumonia, and bronchitis/bronchiolitis) and injury are the causes of over 28% of hospitalization in children under 18 years of age. Mental illness is the most common cause of admissions for children 13 to 17 years of age.
- **Significant adolescent health challenges: substance use and abuse.** There is considerable substance use and abuse in U.S. high school students. Forty-six percent of high school students reported having tried cigarettes in 2009. In 2011 nearly 71% of high school students reported having had at least one drink; 21.9% admitted to more

**Table 1-1** Causes of Death by Age in the United States, 2005

AGE GROUP (YR)	CAUSES OF DEATH IN ORDER OF FREQUENCY
1-4	Unintentional injuries (accidents) Congenital malformations, deformations, and chromosomal abnormalities Homicide Malignant neoplasms Diseases of the heart
5-14	Unintentional injuries (accidents) Malignant neoplasms Congenital malformations, deformations, and chromosomal abnormalities Homicide Diseases of the heart
15-24	Unintentional injuries (accidents) Homicide Suicide Malignant neoplasms Diseases of the heart

From Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Health, United States, 2011: With special feature on socioeconomic status and health (website). <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/11.pdf#102>.

- than five drinks on one day in the previous month, and 8.2% admitted to driving after drinking. Nearly 40% of high school students have tried marijuana; 11.4%, inhalants; 6.8%, cocaine; 3.8%, methamphetamine; 2.9%, heroin; and 2%, injectables.
- **Children in foster care.** Currently there are about 400,000 children in the foster care system. Approximately 25,000 of these children must leave the child welfare system each year. Of those who leave, 25% to 50% experience homelessness and/or joblessness and will not graduate from high school. These children have a high incidence of mental health problems, substance abuse, and early pregnancy for females with an increased likelihood of having a low birth weight baby.

## OTHER HEALTH ISSUES THAT AFFECT CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES

- **Obesity.** The prevalence of obesity continues to increase. The prevalence of **overweight** children 6 to 19 years of age has increased more than fourfold from 4% in 1965 to over 18% in 2010. Currently it is estimated that 32% of children 2 to 19 years of age are overweight or obese. An estimated 300,000 deaths a year and at least \$147 billion in health care costs are associated with the 68% of Americans who are overweight or obese.
- **Sedentary lifestyle.** Among 6 to 11 year olds, 62% do not engage in recommended amounts of moderate or vigorous physical activity. Nearly 40% spend more than 2 hours of screen time (television/videos) per school day.
- **Motor vehicle accidents and injuries.** In 2009, 1314 children 14 years of age or younger died in motor vehicle crashes, and 179,000 were injured. Other causes of childhood injury included drowning, child abuse, and poisonings. The estimated cost of all unintentional childhood injuries is nearly \$300 billion per year in the United States.