WELL-CHILD VISITS

In 2012, 79.5 percent of children under 18 years of age were reported by their parents to have had a preventive or "well-child" medical visit in the past year, when they were not sick or injured. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children have eight preventive health care visits in their first year, three in their second year, and at least one per year from age 3 through adolescence.1 Well-child visits offer an opportunity not only to monitor children's health and provide immunizations but also to assess a child's behavior and development, discuss nutrition, and answer parents’ questions.

The proportion of children receiving well-child visits declines with age. In 2012, 89.1 percent of children aged 4 and younger had received a preventive visit in the past year, compared to 79.2 percent of children 5–11 years of age and 72.0 percent of those aged 12–17 years (figure 1). There was no significant difference between males and females in the proportion of children who received a well-child visit in the past year.

Receipt of preventive medical care also varies by several other factors, including health insurance status and type of insurance, parental education, race and ethnicity, and nativity. In 2012, only 54.2 percent of uninsured children had received a well-child visit in the past year, compared to more than 80 percent of those with public or private insurance (figure 2). Children with at least one parent who had attained more than a high-school level education were more likely to have received a past-year preventive medical visit (82.0 percent) compared to those for whom the highest level of parental education was a high school degree (76.0 percent) or less (72.3 percent).

With respect to race and ethnicity, non-Hispanic Black children were more likely to have received a well-child visit in the past year (85.1 percent) compared to non-Hispanic White children (79.9 percent) and Hispanic children (75.9 percent). Finally, children who were born in the United States were more likely than those born outside the United States to have had a well-child visit in the past year: 79.9 and 71.2 percent, respectively.

Data Sources
Figure 1 and 2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. 2012 National Health Interview Survey. Unpublished estimates. Analyzed by the National Center for Health Statistics.

Endnotes

Suggested Citation