

More young adults getting preventive care after Obamacare, study finds

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More people in early 20s getting blood pressure and routine health checks.

(HealthDay)—More young adults are using certain types of preventive care since the Affordable Care Act, sometimes called "Obamacare," went into effect in the United States, according to a new study.

Significant increases were seen in the numbers of 19- to 25-year-olds getting [preventive care](#), including routine checkups, blood pressure measurement and dental care between 2009 and 2011-12, the study found.

"Although our study is an early evaluation, there are benefits to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) extended-benefits provision," said lead author Xuesong Han, director of surveillance and health services research at the American Cancer Society.

Since 2010, the health-reform law has allowed grown children to stay on their parent's health insurance plan until they turn 26.

After the law went into effect, the percentage of [young adults](#) getting [dental checkups](#) increased almost 6 percent, according to Han. The number of young people having their blood pressure checked went up almost 4 percent and routine checkups increased by nearly 5 percent, compared with young adults before the provision went into effect, she said.

There was, however, not much change in the number of young adults who got flu shots or women who got Pap tests for cervical cancer, Han's team found.

Although the law doesn't require insurers to cover dental checkups through a parent's plan until a child is 26, many dental insurance companies have opted to do so, according to Han. Between 2009 and the 2011-12 period, the number of young adults with private dental insurance rose from 37 percent to 42 percent, according to the study.

The report was published as a letter in the Dec. 11 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Cheryl Fish-Parcham, the private insurance program director at the consumer health care advocacy group Families USA, said, "This study points out one of the strengths of the ACA. This has improved people's access to care."

Fish-Parcham expects this provision of the law will become even more important in the future. The ability to stay on a parent's plan will help young people transition to their own plans, she said.

"People have the ability to shop in the marketplace and get premium

credits," Fish-Parcham said. "Many people in this age group would qualify for premium tax credits."

The ACA, she said, gives [young people](#) the opportunity to maintain their health insurance coverage and access to care that will help them stay healthy.

Continuity of care is important even for young adults who may think that they don't need coverage because they are healthy, Fish-Parcham said.

"If you are one of those people who gets sick or has an accident, the ACA provides you with access to care and protects you from medical bankruptcy," she said.

For the study, Han and colleagues compared the change in the use of medical services among more than 3,300 people who were 19 to 25 years old in 2009, before the health-reform law went into effect, with more than 6,800 young adults who were the same age in 2011 and 2012.

The researchers also looked at how the law affected adults between 26 and 30 years old, as this group wasn't eligible to remain on their parents' plans. The study included 2,200 people in this age group in 2009 and about 4,800 in 2011-12. The older age group saw no increase in dental checkups or [blood pressure measurement](#). They had a slight increase in routine health checkups, and a slight decline in flu shots and Pap tests, according to the study.

More information: For more about the Affordable Care Act, visit the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#).

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