

New data on disease prevention and the utilization of medical services by children and adolescents in Germany

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Has tooth brushing frequency improved among children and adolescents? At what age is occupational therapy most commonly used? How many girls have been vaccinated against Human papillomavirus (HPV)? What influence does social status have on the utilization of medical services? The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) has published new and comprehensive data on disease prevention and the utilization of medical services in the Journal of Health Monitoring. The findings are based on data from the German Health Interview and Examination Survey for Children and Adolescents (KiGGS Wave 2).

The current issue of the Journal (4/2018) focuses on oral health behaviour, the utilization of physical [therapy](#), speech therapy and occupational therapy and the association between the utilization of medical services and social status. New results are also available on orthodontic treatment, HPV vaccination coverage, paediatric and general medical services, and early detection examinations.

Caries is one of the most common diseases in childhood. The high prevalence is mainly due to insufficient oral hygiene and an unfavourable diet (in particular, foods containing sugar). Effective oral hygiene and regular dental check-ups are, besides adequate fluoridation and caries-preventive nutrition, pillars in the prevention of tooth and mouth diseases. Data from KiGGS Wave 2 shows that 22.3 percent of children and adolescents do not brush their teeth often enough. Children

and adolescents of the medium and low social status groups meet the tooth brushing frequency recommendations significantly less often than their peers of the high status group. The utilization of dental check-ups has increased compared to the KiGGS baseline study (2003-2006).

Effective caries prevention requires interdisciplinary cooperation between dentistry, paediatrics and other medical disciplines. The authors from the RKI emphasise that 'target group appropriate measures, such as for children and adolescents with low [social status](#) and migration background have delivered promising results. In this regard, day-care centres and schools play a key role as settings'.

Within one year, 9.6 percent of children and adolescents use physical therapy, 6.1 percent speech therapy and 4.0 percent occupational therapy. Social differences have also been identified in this context: socially disadvantaged children use [occupational therapy](#) and speech therapy more frequently, while physiotherapy is used less frequently. Since the KiGGS baseline study, the use of physical therapy and speech therapy has increased.

KiGGS is the only comprehensive study on the health of children and adolescents in Germany, and an important database for evidence-based policy decisions. KiGGS Wave 2 was carried out between 2014 and 2017. The data can be used for trend analyses by comparing them with data from the KiGGS baseline study and KiGGS Wave 1 (2009-2012). Longitudinal data from [children](#) and adolescents who already participated in the baseline study can be used to analyse causes of disease, risk factors and protective factors.

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