

Health care utilization up with childhood stressful life events

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Stressful life events (SLEs) in childhood, including emotional abuse,

unmet basic needs, experiences of racism, household mental illness, household substance abuse, parental incarceration, and exposure to neighborhood violence, are associated with increased health care utilization and unmet medical care needs, according to a study published online Aug. 8 in the *National Health Statistics Reports*, a publication from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Lindsey I. Black, M.P.H., from the National Center for Health Statistics in Hyattsville, Maryland, and colleagues used data from the 2021 National Health Interview Survey to examine the percentage of children who experienced one or more SLEs and described the association between SLEs and selected [health care utilization](#) indicators over the past 12 months.

The researchers found that one in five children aged 2 to 17 years had ever experienced an SLE in 2021. All SLEs were related to higher health care utilization and unmet medical care needs in general. No significant associations were found between experiencing SLEs and not receiving preventive health care. For children with SLEs, higher rates of health care utilization, unmet medical care needs, and mental health care utilization generally persisted after adjustment for demographic characteristics.

"Children with SLEs have increased utilization of emergency and urgent health care as well as mental health care, and have unmet medical needs," the authors write. "Focusing on specific SLEs and relationships to health care access and utilization can contribute to the broader understanding of the social determinants of health for children."

More information: [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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