

## **More U.S. Children Taking Drugs to Treat Chronic Conditions**

Between 2002 and 2005, the use of type 2 diabetes drugs by American children ages 10 to 14 more than doubled, and there was a 166 percent increase in the use of the drugs by girls in that age group. The likely reason is obesity, which is closely associated with type 2 diabetes, say the authors of a study that looked at chronic medication use in children ages 5 to 19.

The researchers, from the Saint Louis University School of Medicine and School of Public Health and pharmacy benefit manager Express Scripts, also found increases in children's use of drugs to treat blood pressure, cholesterol, asthma and depression.

Among the findings:

- Use of blood pressure drugs by males ages 15 to 19 increased 15.4 percent.
- Use of antidepressants by females ages 15 to 19 increased 6.8 percent.
- Use of asthma controller medication increased 67.3 percent among children ages 5 to 9; 38.8 percent among children ages 10 to 14; and 34.7 percent among those ages 15 to 19.

"Overall, these patterns could reflect changing prescribing behaviors by physicians (anti-hypertensives), increases in the risk factors for chronic diseases (type 2 antidiabetics, antihyperlipimeds), increased office visit rates and therefore screening rates -- particularly for females -- or trends toward greater use of drug therapy as the preferred mode of treating children with chronic conditions," **Sharon M. Homan**, professor of community health at Saint Louis University School of Public Health, said in a prepared statement.

The study was presented Wednesday, Nov. 7, 2007 at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association, in Washington, D.C.

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