

Utilization of Ambulatory Medical Care by Women: United States, 1997-98

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
National Center for Health Statistics

Men's Health Network synopsis – July 26, 2001
www.menshealthnetwork.org

This report describes the 500 million ambulatory medical care visits to doctors' offices and hospital outpatient and emergency departments made each year by women 15 years of age and older. In this study, CDC examines women's use of ambulatory medical care in 1997 and 1998 and finds that in many significant ways their care differs from men.

The rate of doctor visits for such reasons as annual examinations and preventive services was 100 percent higher for women than for men and medication patterns differed significantly.

The rate of all types of nonpregnancy-related visits by women 15-44 years of age was about 56 percent greater than the rate for men in this age group.

From the report (page 12):

Regardless of race, the overall rate of ambulatory care use among women with nonpregnancy-related diagnoses was 33 percent higher than for men. ...the difference in nonpregnancy ambulatory care visits by women and men decreased with age.

The rate of visits by women 15-44 years of age was about 56 percent greater than the rate for men in this age group.

The rate of visits by women for non-illness was 100 percent higher than among men, after controlling for age and removing pregnancy-related visits.

...among people 65 years of age and over, the rate of visits...was fairly similar...

As would be expected, there are more drug mentions per population among women than there are men, since there are more visits per population. (For prescription rates see Figure 19 on page 14.)

Explanations offered (page 15):

There are many possible explanations for this. Women's self-reported health is worse than men's, on average, which may either reflect more illness or differences in the way health is viewed or discussed by women. Women generally are responsible for their family's health and so may think about health care needs more than men. They are more likely to have a usual source of care, which is a strong predictor of health care utilization. They also tend to use medical care for screening and health education more often than men. Women have been said to also be more likely to report and act on illness, although research has not always borne this out.

Among the older population:

Older women are more likely to have disabling conditions than older men. There are more women in the oldest age categories, and health care is used in the oldest ages at the highest rates.

Caution:

Because this report looks at visits, rather than people, conclusions should be made with caution.

View the CDC Press Release and study at:

Press Release: www.cdc.gov/nchs/releases/01news/newstudy.htm

Study: www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_13/sr13_149.pdf