



Nearly 30% of American children don't have full access to health care services

Report from *The Children's Health Fund* paints a bleak picture

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Nearly 30 percent of U.S. children — 23.7 million — lack regular access to health care at some point during a given year, according to a study by The Children's Health Fund. The figures include 9 million children — defined by the fund as people under age 20 — who have no health insurance, another

11.5 million who go without health coverage at some point during a given year, and 3.2 million who cannot get to medical appointments because they do not have reliable transportation. "More kids than ever are having difficulty getting the health care they need, and it's not just a matter of insurance," said Dr. Irwin Redlener, president of the New York-based fund, which released the study Thursday. "The fact is that kids with neglected health problems will have trouble in school and can end up being far less productive in life than they could be." Redlener, a professor at Columbia University's

Mailman School of Public Health, said children may lose their health coverage at some point during a given year if a parent becomes unemployed or gets a job without health insurance. Government-funded health insurance programs require annual reauthorization, so there is often a paperwork lag, he said. "There are all these different scenarios of why you would be on-again and off-again," Redlener said. The 3.2 million children who lack transportation to doctors' appointments include many living in rural areas where there are few health providers, he said. The Children's Health Fund presented the report Thurs-

day at a health care summit on Capitol Hill in Washington, where Congress is debating the reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program that covers families making too much to qualify for Medicaid, the government health insurance program for the poor, but not enough to afford private insurance. A large expansion of the program is a priority for Democrats. They want to spend \$75 billion over five years; the Bush administration is seeking less than half that. The Children's Health Fund, founded in 1987 by Redlener and singer Paul Simon, operates 21 pediatric health programs nationwide.

HEALTH CALENDAR

FRIDAY 6/1 | Five Stages of Change, Sun Street Centers, 11 Peach St., Salinas. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Lunch and snacks provided. \$100-\$125. 753-5135.

FRIDAY 6/1 | Rosen Method Bodywork and Movement, Monterey Bay Holistic Center, 330 Reservation Road, Suite E-1, Marina. 7 p.m. 647-8039.

THURSDAY 6/7 | Alliance on Aging Wellness Lecture Series, Monterey Senior Center, 280 Dickman St., Monterey. Forgive For Good, 1 to 2 p.m. Free. 646-1458.

SATURDAY 6/9 | Care-giver University, Salinas Adult School, 20 Sherwood Place, Salinas. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. For those caring for elderly family members. Mini-workshops, exhibits, local resources for caregivers. Respite scholarships: 459-6639. Free, pre-registration required by June 6. 796-6920; www.salinasadultschool.com.

WEDNESDAY 6/20 | Yuen Method Noninvasive Chinese Energetic Technique, Monterey Bay Holistic Center, 330 Reservation Road, Suite E-1, Marina. 7 p.m. 484-9335.

THURSDAY 6/21 | Cancer Concerns: Meet the Experts, Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, Highway 68 (Holman Highway), Monterey. 5 to 7 p.m. June 21, Cancer Center Classroom. 625-4753.

MONDAY 6/25 | Look Good, Feel Better, Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, Highway 68 (Holman Highway), Monterey. 10 a.m. to noon in Cancer Center Classroom. 625-4753

TUESDAY 6/26 | Yoga, Watsonville Youth Center, 30 Maple Ave., Watsonville. 12:15 to 1 p.m. Tuesdays June 26-July 17. \$30, must be 16 or older to register. 768-3240.

SUNDAY 7/1 | Rosen Method Bodywork and Movement, Monterey Bay Holistic Center, 330 Reservation Road, Suite E-1, Marina. 7 p.m. 647-8039.

TUESDAYS

Group for Alleviating Anxiety and Depression Through Spiritual Principles, Monterey Church of Religious Science, 400 W. Franklin St., Monterey. 7 to 9 p.m., facilitated by the Rev. Bob Luckin. \$10 per group. 372-7326.

Jazzercise, El Dorado Park, 1655 El Dorado Drive, Salinas. 6 to 7 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday. \$30 per month. Jarrod, 758-7950 or 758-7354.

WEDNESDAYS

Up From Grief, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1071 Pajaro St., Salinas. 1 p.m. Wednesday in parish hall lounge. Non-sectarian support group for people who have experienced the death of a loved one. 424-7331.

THURSDAYS

Tai Chi Basics for Seniors, Monterey Bay Holistic Center, 330 Reservation Road, Suite E-1, Marina. 11 a.m. to noon. \$5 per class, pay by month. 884-1247.

Jazzercise, El Dorado Park, 1655 El Dorado Drive, Salinas. 6 to 7 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday. \$30 per month. Jarrod, 758-7950 or 758-7354.

Calcium from milk important even to lactose-intolerant kids

The condition can be mild enough to tolerate some dairy products

By KATHLEEN DOHENY HealthDay

If your child is lactose intolerant, you probably shy away from giving him milk or other dairy products. But that may not be the best tactic to take, experts say. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatricians — America's largest organization of pediatricians — is urging the moms and the dads of lactose-intolerant kids to at least give dairy a chance. The AAP issued new guidelines several months ago that advise parents to not give up on giving their lactose-intolerant children dairy products. The reason: The calcium in these foods is important for bone mineral health, and dairy products also contain other nutrients important for growth in children and teens. Lactose intolerance is often mild enough so that kids can tolerate at least some milk and milk products, experts added. "Lactose intolerance is relatively common," noted Dr. Melvin Heyman, a professor of pediatrics at the University of California, San Francisco, and a member of

the committee that wrote the AAP guidelines. While he was not familiar with any study citing the exact prevalence, he estimated that 20 percent or 30 percent of U.S. children have "some degree of lactose intolerance." However, "there is a lot of confusion," Heyman said. Parents often confuse milk protein intolerance and lactose intolerance, he said. "Some people do get allergic to the protein in milk," he added. That condition can be serious but probably affects only 3 percent to 5 percent of children in the United States, he said. An intolerance for lactose — the sugar found in milk — is much more common. Even with this sensitivity, Heyman said, the new thinking is that children may still tolerate some dairy. "To be sure calcium intake is sufficient, Heyman sometimes tells parents to focus more on yogurt and cheese than on milk, especially if milk gives their child the classic intolerance symptom of abdominal pain. "There is less lactose in yogurt and cheese compared to milk," he explained. Or, your child may be able to drink a little milk without the reaction of stomach pain, he said. Parents can also educate themselves about lactose intolerance, added Dr. Frank Greer, a professor of pediatrics at the University of

Wisconsin, Madison, and chairman of the academy's Committee on Nutrition. "If your child is going to have a lactose-intolerance problem, it's usually identified as a problem in the first five years," Greer said. Certain ethnic and racial groups are more likely to suffer from the condition, including blacks, Hispanics and some Asians, he added. Even if there is a problem, Greer said, "the position now is that your child, even if lactose intolerant, can really tolerate small amounts of lactose, especially in dairy products other than milk, such as yogurt and cheese. Even with milk, you can sort of build up a tolerance." Moderation may be key, Heyman said. Your child may be able to have one glass of milk, but probably not two or three in a day. If you suspect your child has lactose intolerance, Heyman said, your pediatrician will probably suggest taking him or her off all dairy for two weeks. "If the symptoms go away, we can be pretty sure it's lactose intolerance," he said. If it's still not clear, there is a simple in-office test your doctor can do, Heyman said. When choosing dairy products for your child, look at the label to be sure you are getting a healthy dose of calcium. "Ideal would be the same amount as in milk, 250 or 300 milligrams (per serving)," he said.