

## Exploring Women's Use of Healthcare

*Recognizing how women's health concerns differ from the general population can help improve health and well-being of American families, report suggests.*

Women are 33% more likely to visit a healthcare provider than men, according to a 2002 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The report describes the more than 500 million medical visits made yearly by women 15-years and older to doctors' offices, hospital outpatient services, and emergency departments during 1997-1998.

The study also showed that doctor visits for annual exams and preventive care were *more than double* for women than for men. On average, women made 4.6 office visits per year, which ranged from 3.8 to 7.1 visits depending on age. Patterns of medication use also differed.

The report compared patient characteristics including age, ethnicity, insurance coverage, type of healthcare provider and type of care. Among the differences noted, young women were more likely to visit primary care doctors or emergency departments; older women were more likely to see specialists.

Other findings of the report:

- ✓ Blood pressure screening was the most common service performed – at over 50% of all visits, while pelvic exams and urine tests were done at about 14% of all visits.
- ✓ 80% of visits were to office-based doctors, with 10% of visits each to hospital outpatient services or emergency departments.
- ✓ Private insurance accounted for payment of 50% of all visits, 22% by Medicare and 9% by Medicaid.

About the findings, Yvonne Green, Director of CDC's Office of Women's Health explains, "It's important to understand the way women use healthcare in America, so that healthcare providers can be prepared and programs developed to meet women's special healthcare needs."

### *References:*

Utilization of Ambulatory Medical Care by Women: United States, 1997-98. Series Report 13, No. 149. 51 pp. (PHS) 2001-1720.

Internet site: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/releases/01news/newstudy.htm>. (January 2002).