

PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS & UPDATES

TEXAS RESEARCH-TO-POLICY COLLABORATION PROJECT

March 2025



Celebrate National Nutrition Month®



Upcoming Webinars

The Status of Child Health in Texas: Results from the Texas SPAN 2021-2023 Survey

March 27, 2025

12:00 PM- 1:00 PM CT

Register Today!

What is the status of child health in Texas post-COVID-19?

The Texas School Physical Activity and Nutrition (Texas SPAN) survey gathered data during the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. This presentation will highlight the latest findings on childhood obesity, youth dietary habits, and physical activity behaviors across Texas.

While some areas show improvement, others still face significant challenges. Join us to explore where Texas children stand today and discuss potential strategies to address these ongoing health concerns.

Tune in to see where Texas children are and potential strategies for addressing these needs.



Presenter:

Deanna Hoelscher, PhD, RD, LD, CNS

John P. McGovern Professor in Health Promotion
and Austin Regional Campus Dean
UTHealth Houston School of Public Health



Moderator:

Joel Romo

President & Founder
Texana Public Affairs

TX RPC Project Health Policy Resources:

5 New Reports Published!

Listening to Voices to Guide Quality Maternity Care in Texas

February 21, 2025

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Many women report experiencing mistreatment while receiving pregnancy and maternity care, contributing to adverse maternal and infant health outcomes.
2. Respectful maternity care is an approach to pregnancy care and child birth that prevents harm and mistreatment and treats patients with dignity and autonomy.
3. Doulas can play an essential role in building respectful and collaborative care models between patients and providers. Listening to the perspectives of doulas and their clients can help shape new approaches to providing respectful maternity care.

Background and Definition

Respectful maternity care is an approach to pregnancy care and childbirth that prioritizes a patient's dignity and privacy, ensures they have the freedom to make informed decisions, and protects them from harm and mistreatment.¹

- Examples of mistreatment in maternity care include:
 - receiving no response to requests for help
 - being shouted at or scolded
 - not having physical privacy protected
 - being threatened with withholding treatment
 - being coerced to accept unwanted treatment
 - unexplained deviations from birth plan
- Disrespectful care can lead to adverse maternal and infant health outcomes such as:
 - postpartum hemorrhage
 - physical injuries to the mother or newborn
 - psychological consequences such as post-traumatic stress, suicidal ideation, and feelings of helplessness
- The resulting loss of trust in the healthcare system can prevent women from seeking future health care, increasing the rate of births with attendants who may lack appropriate skills or qualifications.¹



Doulas and Respectful Care

There is increasing awareness about the role of respectful maternity care in optimal maternal and infant outcomes, with recognition of the need for guidelines on how to implement respectful maternity care programs.³

- Doula support plays an important role in collaborative and respectful maternity care models as it increases the likelihood a pregnant woman will receive respectful care and have positive birth experience.⁴



Food Additives and Dyes

March 7, 2025

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Synthetic food colorings and dyes have been linked to negative health effects, including hyperactivity, irritability, and sleep disruptions in children.
2. Some additives such as synthetic food dyes and some artificial sweeteners found in ultra-processed foods are associated with higher cancer risks and are being evaluated for additional negative health outcomes by the Food and Drug Administration.

Background

- Food additives are substances primarily added to processed foods or other foods produced on an industrial scale.¹
- Additives are added to ensure processed food remains safe and in good condition throughout its journey from factories or industrial kitchens to warehouses and shops, and finally to customers.²
- Color additives are a type of dye, pigmentation, or other type of substance that is used to color foods, drugs, cosmetic materials, or other items.³
- Color additives can also be known as synthetic food coloring, and includes colors such as red, blue, green, and yellow.⁴
- These colors can be used to make foods like candy, sweets, fruit juice drinks, or medicine look more appealing and appetizing.⁵

On January 16, 2025, the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) banned the use of Red Dye #3 in food, with all industries to remove red dyes from being used in items by January 15, 2027. This includes the use of Red Dye #3 in foods, dietary supplements and regulated drugs.

Reference 1

Food Additives and Health

- Some food additives used in producing, packaging, and preserving can impact the thyroid and other hormone systems.⁶
- Food additive dyes contain chemicals that could worsen hyperactivity, inattentiveness, and additional behavioral problems in children.⁷
- Synthetic food coloring and dyes has been shown to be associated with increased irritability, restlessness, and disruption in sleep patterns among children who consumed foods with synthetic dyes.^{8,9}

Food additives, like sweeteners and dyes, are frequently used in ultra-processed foods.¹⁰



Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

March 3, 2025

Introduction

- Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large group of manufactured chemicals that have been widely used in industry since 1940s.¹
- Many of the PFAS break down very slowly and can accumulate over time in the environment, animals, and human bodies.²

PFAS can be found in everyday products, including:³



Health Implications and PFAS

Due to the persistence in the environment and potential health risks, PFAS have become a significant concern in public health and environmental policy.

Exposure to high levels of PFAS is associated with various health outcomes and diseases with sufficient evidence, for example:⁴



- PFAS is associated with the following health outcomes and diseases with limited evidence:⁴

- Increased risk of breast and testicular cancer in adults.
- Increased risk of pregnancy-induced hypertension.
- Increased risk of thyroid disease and dysfunction.
- Increased risk of ulcerative colitis, a chronic disease that causes inflammation in the colon.



Listening to Voices to Guide Quality Maternity Care in Texas

Released February 21, 2025

This report discusses doulas, respectful maternity care in Texas, and recommendations for the implementation of respectful maternity care.

Food Additives and Dyes

Released March 7, 2025

This rapid response request report discusses food additives and dyes and the potential health risks related to these additives.

Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

Released March 3, 2025

This rapid response request report discusses PFAS and the potential health risks related to these chemicals.

Effects of Tobacco Use on Health

March 11, 2025

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Tobacco smoking is the leading cause of cancer, lung, and heart diseases in Texas.
2. The U.S. spent over \$600 billion in 2018 on smoking-related costs, including health care and job loss productivity.
3. Tobacco prevention and cessation programs, such as Truth Initiative,¹ can help support healthier Texans of all ages.

Impact of Tobacco Smoking

Cigarette smoking is the most common type of tobacco use, but other popular products include cigars, cigarillos, waterpipe tobacco (hookah), and smokeless tobacco.¹

- Nicotine is highly addictive, especially when smoking begins at a young age.
- Around 90% of smokers began smoking before the age of 18.²
- People who smoke are at a higher risk for heart attack, stroke, lung disease, and cancer.³
- Tobacco use is the leading cause of several cancers, including lung, bladder, stomach, and esophageal, among others.⁴
- In Texas, lung, bronchial, and tracheal cancers were the leading cancer cases (82%) from tobacco smoking between 2013 and 2017.⁵
- Lung, bronchial, and tracheal cancers are the second most commonly diagnosed cancers, following prostate cancer in males and breast cancer in women.⁶
- Cigarette smokers are almost four times as likely to develop heart disease, and twice as likely to experience a stroke than non-smokers.⁷
- Approximately 3 in 10 cancer deaths are a result of tobacco use.⁸

Smokers are 25x more likely to develop lung cancer than non-smokers⁹



Tobacco Vaping Use Among Youth

March 11, 2025

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Vaping tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, contain high amounts of nicotine that are addictive, particularly for adolescents.
2. Teens who were exposed to e-cigarette advertisements, especially on social media, were more likely to vape.
3. Prevention efforts like Catch My Breath¹ are needed to limit the exposure of tobacco products to children and adolescents.

Electronic Cigarettes and Vapes

These battery-powered devices create an aerosol that contains nicotine, appealing flavors, and chemicals, which are harmful to the body and developing adolescent brains.^{2,3}

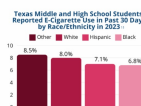
Youth who vape nicotine are 3x as likely to vape cannabis⁴

- Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and vapes simulate smoking. Newer models are disposable, while older models look similar to USB flash drives.⁵
- Vapes can contain as much or more tobacco as a carton of cigarettes, delivering higher amounts of nicotine quickly.⁶
- Youth who smoke e-cigarettes are at an increased risk for coughing, wheezing, and asthma exacerbations, which can lead to hospitalization.⁷
- A 10% increase in tobacco product pricing has shown to reduce youth consumption by approximately 7%.⁸

Early Exposure Poses Risks

E-cigarettes are the most commonly used tobacco product among U.S. youth.⁹

- In 2024, approximately 1.6 million U.S. middle and high school students reported using e-cigarettes, with 44% of those students reporting vape usage.¹⁰
- Exposure to e-cigarettes earlier in life led to youth and adolescents being almost four times as likely to smoke in adulthood.¹¹
- Around 90% of adult daily smokers began smoking before the age of 18.¹²
- Students who don't smoke but are exposed to e-cigarette use on school campuses are nearly twice as likely to start smoking.¹³



TX RPC Project Health Policy Resources



<https://sph.utah.edu/research/centers/delllegislative-initiatives/texas-rpc-resources>

Effects of Tobacco Use on Health

Released March 11, 2025

This report discusses the effects of tobacco use on health and provides recommendations to help support tobacco prevention and cessation programs to promote healthier Texans.

Tobacco Vaping Use Among Youth

Released March 11, 2025

This report discusses tobacco vaping use among youth in the U.S. and Texas and provides recommendations on vaping prevention and cessation for youth and adolescents.

Read our previously published Health Policy Resources.

Texas Child Health Status Reports: Updates Coming Soon!

A series of reports on Texas child health topics using state-level data from the Texas School Physical Activity and Nutrition Project 2021-2023 will be published soon. Topics include obesity, nutrition, breakfast consumption, physical activity, screen time, sleep, and more.

Read our previously
published reports.

Resource Corner

The TX RPC Project develops accessible and accurate public health policy-related resources from field experts. Links to specific resource categories on our website can be found below:

[Texas
Legislative
Bill Tracker](#)

[Michael & Susan
Dell Center for
Healthy Living
Webinar Series](#)

[TX RPC Project
Health Policy
Resources](#)

[Texas Child
Health Status
Reports and
Toolkits](#)

[TX RPC Project
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Request information on a public health topic.

About

The [Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration \(TX RPC\) Project](#) is a nonpartisan network that aims to bridge research and policy by supporting partnerships between child health researchers and legislators.

If you and your legislative office are interested in collaborating with our team to receive data-driven information at state, district, and local levels, please reach out to TXRPCNetwork@uth.tmc.edu.

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