

**Scientific
Advisory Board**

David A. Birch, PhD, CHES
Professor & Chair
Southern Illinois
University Carbondale
Department of Health
Education & Recreation
Carbondale, Illinois

Stephen Brown, PhD
Assistant Professor
Southern Illinois
University Carbondale
Department of Health
Education & Recreation
Carbondale, Illinois

Judy M. Gantt
Director
CDC Global Health Odyssey
Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention
Atlanta, Georgia

Neil Izenberg, MD
Founder/Chief Executive
Nemours Center for
Children's Health Media
Editor-in-Chief
KidsHealth
Wilmington, Delaware

D'Arcy Lyness, PhD
Behavioral Health Editor
KidsHealth
Wilmington, Delaware

Diana Ruschhaupt, MS, CHES
Director of Programs
Ruth Lilly Health Education
Center
Indianapolis, Indiana

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kira Ebert
KidsPoll@KidsHealth.org
(302) 651-4115 – phone

**NEW HEALTH SURVEY REVEALS THAT OLDER KIDS ARE
LESS LIKELY TO FOLLOW WHAT THEY'RE TAUGHT
THAN YOUNGER KIDS ARE**

*Poll underscores that, to promote the adoption of healthy behaviors,
health education needs to engage kids early and keep them motivated*

Milwaukee, WI, and Wilmington, DE, January 31, 2005 – A new KidsHealth® KidsPoll found that 80% of the kids surveyed said that there is “a lot” or “some” they can do to grow up to be healthy adults. The majority of 1,178 kids ages 9 to 13 polled (78%) said that most of what they hear about health is “very” or “sort of” easy to understand. However, older kids said that they were less likely to follow what they’re taught about health.

The KidsPoll found that:

- 64% of 9-year-olds surveyed said that they are “very interested” in learning about health versus 19% of 13-year-olds.
- 77% of 9-year-olds surveyed said that they follow what they’re taught “all the time” or “most of the time” versus 43% of 13-year-olds.

Surprisingly, children’s declining interest in learning about health comes at a time when most kids are going through puberty and experiencing major changes in their bodies – changes that one might think would result not in an increased interest in health. Additionally, this is an age when school-based health education typically receives more emphasis as a separate topic area.

This first KidsHealth KidsPoll of the school year focused on *health literacy* – the ability to obtain, understand, and use basic health information. Literacy skills are a stronger predictor

of an individual's health status than age, income, employment status, education level, or racial/ethnic group, according to Partnership for Clear Health Communication. The Institute of Medicine estimates that low health literacy is costing the U.S. health care system more than \$58 billion annually and that nearly 1 in 2 adults do not understand basic health information. Adult health literacy is beginning to receive considerable attention, but very little has been done to understand the topic among children. This poll is an effort to expand understanding of child health literacy.

What do these findings suggest for health professionals, teachers, and parents? Kids should be engaged in learning about age-appropriate health issues throughout their school years. Educational programs also need to include ways to motivate kids to adopt healthy behaviors.

Where are kids getting most of their information about health? Forty percent (40%) of kids surveyed said “school.” “A doctor or nurse” was the second-most common answer given (29%), and “parents” was a distant third (12%). However, when asked where they would go first if they had an important health question, most kids said “a parent” (31%). This suggests that parents may not be assuming as important a role as they could.

Where do kids say they're most likely to get the wrong information about health? The runaway winners were “TV” and “friends,” each cited by 36% of kids polled.

The 1,178 children ages 9 to 13 participated in the KidsHealth KidsPoll at 11 member sites of the National Association of Health Education Centers throughout the United States.

The survey was conducted by researchers from the Department of Health Education and Recreation, Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Survey questions were drafted with the expertise of the Scientific Advisory Board and Zandra Maffett Fennell, director of professional relations and advocacy for McNeil Consumer & Specialty Pharmaceuticals. Ms. Fennell assists health care provider groups including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) in assessing the health-literacy needs of their patients.

For complete survey findings and methodology, visit nahec.org/KidsPoll. For more information on findings or to arrange an interview concerning the KidsHealth KidsPoll, contact Kira Ebert at (302) 651-4115 or KidsPoll@KidsHealth.org.

For information for parents, visit: [KidsPoll: Children Chime in About Health Literacy and Where They Go for Answers](#)

For information for kids, visit: [What Kids Say About: Their Health](#)

About the KidsHealth® KidsPoll

A project of the National Association of Health Education Centers (NAHEC), the Nemours Center for Children’s Health Media (creators of KidsHealth.org), and Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Department of Health Education and Recreation (project researchers), the KidsHealth KidsPoll gives children a national platform to share their views on health-related issues that affect them. Throughout the school year, regular KidsHealth KidsPolls will reveal kids’ opinions on issues such as bullying, stress, and peer pressure. For more information about the KidsHealth KidsPoll, please visit nahec.org/KidsPoll/.

About the National Association of Health Education Centers (NAHEC)

NAHEC is the national association and network of nonprofit health education centers (HECs) and of other organizations that support children’s health education and provide products and services to HECs. NAHEC member centers reached over 3 million children, teachers, and parents in 2004. HECs use life-size exhibits, advanced audio-visual technology, and specialized, interactive instructional techniques not generally found in conventional classrooms. The curriculum is designed to support school-mandated areas of study. With programs like "Whodunit? - A Forensic Science Camp", Hummers outfitted with removable organs, and playgrounds modeled after anatomy parts, you’ll see why former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop proclaimed that health education centers “put pizzazz in prevention.” For more information about NAHEC, please visit nahec.org.

About KidsHealth and the Nemours Center for Children’s Health Media

The Nemours Center for Children’s Health Media is a unique physician-led editorial group that specializes in developing age-appropriate online, print, and video educational media for parents, kids, and teens. It creates KidsHealth.org, the most visited website devoted to children’s health. In addition to medical information, KidsHealth features articles on emotional, behavioral, and developmental issues of interest to all three audiences. In 2004, over 60 million families turned to KidsHealth.org for expert answers – making it the Web’s most accessed site on children’s health. Recent accolades include the **2004 Parents’ Choice Gold Award**, the **2004 Teachers’ Choice Award for the Family**, the **2004 Webby Award for Best Health Website**, and selection as one of the **50 Coolest Websites** by **TIME Magazine**. The Nemours Center for Children’s Health Media offers the nation’s only fellowships in children’s health media—providing physicians with the opportunity to learn how to improve family health through effective communications. Nemours is one of the largest nonprofit organizations devoted to children’s health. For more information about KidsHealth, please visit KidsHealth.org.

About Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Department of Health Education & Recreation

Researchers from Southern Illinois University Carbondale’s Department of Health Education and Recreation conduct the KidsHealth KidsPoll. The research team for this project is led by Steve Brown and David A. Birch, faculty members in the Department of Health Education and Recreation. The department offers a bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degree in health education and a bachelor’s and master’s degree in recreation. The health education program is recognized nationally as a leader in school health education and graduate-level teaching and research. Graduates of the program are in health education leadership positions across the country. The department includes 11 health education faculty members and six recreation faculty members. For more information about SIUC, please visit www.siu.edu.