

**HEALTH AND LIFESTYLES OF A RANDOM
SAMPLE OF ADULTS IN AVON FAMILY
HEALTH SERVICES AUTHORITY**

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SUMMARY

This is an interim report on the health and lifestyles of a random sample of adults from Southmead within Avon Family Health Services Authority. It forms part of a larger project funded by the Department of Health which is undertaking an evaluation of health interventions by continence advisory services and primary health care teams on patient outcomes related to incontinence. This report presents specific health and lifestyle information along with data relating to patients' use of formal contacts and services. This information is essential for identifying health needs and for the commissioning of local health services.

An overall response rate of 58% was obtained and provided a sample of 3,429 residents aged between 18 to 98 years of age. Significantly more women than men participated in the survey, although men were significantly older than women. Significantly more people aged between 30 and 64 years of age and from the higher social classes participated in the survey. Information collected included demographic data, general health, lifestyle behaviours such as smoking, use of alcohol, diet, self care and use of formal contacts and services.

Health status was measured using the Short Form 36 (SF36) (Ware 1993). As this survey included people over the age of 65 years it makes an important contribution to the field of health measurement using the SF36 in an elderly population. Older people and those in social class V reported the poorest health status.

Only a minority of people (10%) were classified as obese. Most people ate a diet that included green vegetables or salad and fresh fruit. Significant differences in diet were found according to gender, social class and age. The majority of people (74%) would sometimes drink alcohol, although significantly more women than men never drank alcohol.

Twenty percent of people smoked cigarettes, which is the target identified in Health of the Nation for the prevalence of smoking to be reduced to by the year 2000. Significantly more women than men have never smoked, although there was a trend for more younger women rather than older women to smoke. Significantly more women than men were classified as moderate smokers and significantly more people aged between 45 to 54 years of age were classified as heavy smokers.

A minority of people lived alone (13%) or were carers (8%). Only a minority of people experienced problems with their eye sight or feet and their activities of daily living.

Significantly more women than men had minor problems with their feet such as corns or bunions.

The majority of people (96%) had a telephone. Formal contacts and use of services were received by a minority of people, with people over the age of 65 more likely to use these services, although the majority of people (82%) had seen their GP or family doctor within the last month to twelve months.

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INTRODUCTION

This is an interim report on the health and lifestyles of a random sample of adults from the population of Southmead within Avon Family Health Services Authority (F.H.S.A.). It forms part of a much larger project funded by the Department of Health which is undertaking an evaluation of health interventions by continence advisory services and primary health care teams on patient outcomes related to incontinence.

The purpose of this report is to present specific health and lifestyle information along with data relating to patients use of formal contacts and health services. This information is necessary when identifying the health needs of local populations and for the commissioning of local health services. The introduction of the GP contract (DH 1989a) and Health of the Nation (DH 1992) has placed the emphasis upon health promotion and the setting of targets to improve the health of populations. Along with developments in primary care and public health in general (DH 1993, DH 1994a), this has led to a number of health and lifestyle surveys being undertaken (Roberts et al 1992, Wright et al 1992, Dawson 1993). Information relating to health and lifestyle and the use of health services is essential for both purchasers and providers in order to identify the health needs of local populations and for the commissioning of local services. It was felt this information obtained as part of the larger project on the evaluation of continence services would be relevant and more helpful to share with local purchasers and providers at an interim stage of the project for use in their commissioning of local health services.

The information covered in this report relates to demographic data, general health, lifestyle behaviours such as smoking, use of alcohol, diet, self care and use of formal contacts and services.