

## **U.S. Has Worst Health Outcomes of All Wealthy Countries, Study Finds**

*By David Gutierrez, NaturalNews.com*

Residents of the United States are less healthy than those in any other wealthy country, according to a report from the *National Research Council and Institute of Medicine*. This is true in spite of the fact that the United States spends more on health care than any other country.

U.S. residents suffer from higher rates of disease and injury and have shorter lifespans, the report found. This is true for people of every age up to 75, regardless of insurance status, race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, college education, or even prevalence of healthy behaviors.

"We were struck by the gravity of these findings," said Steven H. Woolf of Virginia Commonwealth University, a member of the panel that issued the report.

"Americans are dying and suffering at rates that we know are unnecessary because people in other high-income countries are living longer lives and enjoying better health. What concerns our panel is why, for decades, we have been slipping behind."

### **A comprehensive review**

The report is the first to comprehensively analyze mortality, incidence of disease and injury, and health behavior across the entire life span for 17 separate wealthy countries, including the United States, Australia, Canada, Japan and a number of European nations.

The researchers found that the United States ranked worst or nearly worst in nine separate measures of national health: chronic lung disease; disability; drug-related death; HIV and AIDS; heart disease; obesity and diabetes; infant mortality and low birth weight; injury and homicide; and teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

Strikingly, many of these problems fall most heavily upon children and adolescents. This likely contributes to the fact that the United States has the highest infant mortality of any wealthy country, and has for decades. The United States also ranks consistently poorly on rates of premature birth and childhood survival to age 5.

Other major U.S. health problems also affect the young more strongly. The U.S. has the highest rates of teen pregnancy among any country studied, and among the highest rates of adolescent deaths from traffic accidents or homicide. In fact, the life expectancy among U.S. males is dramatically lower than that in the other countries, and nearly two-thirds of this difference is attributable to death before the age of 50.

"It's a tragedy. Our report found that an equally large, if not larger, disadvantage exists among

younger Americans," Woolf said. "I don't think most parents know that, on average, infants, children, and adolescents in the U.S. die younger and have greater rates of illness and injury than youth in other countries."

The report enumerated many of the reasons that the U.S. lags so far behind comparable nations in most health outcomes, and noted that public health officials could start remedying many of these factors immediately.

"Research is important, but we should not wait for more data before taking action, because we already know what to do," Woolf said. "If we fail to act, the disadvantage will continue to worsen and our children will face shorter lives and greater rates of illness than their peers in other rich nations."