

# Press release

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The National Health Report 2020

## Early years of life set the foundations for health

**The National Health Report 2020 from the Swiss Health Observatory (Obsan) investigates the health of the younger generation. Overall, the report presents an encouraging picture: Despite the fact that two out of every ten children, young people and young adults live with either a chronic health risk or chronic disease, nine out of ten children or young people in Switzerland say they feel well or very well. The most important action needed is to fill the data gaps in order to be ready for future challenges.**

The National Health Report 2020 presents current knowledge about the health of children, young people and young adults in Switzerland. It describes the influence of surroundings and environment, health behaviour and, in particular, digital media use. It also takes a close look at the health system.

### Equal health opportunities – essential even before birth

The first phase of life is crucial to the rest of a person's life. Unfavourable circumstances in childhood or even before birth can foster disease later in life. Overweight children often grow up into overweight adults. Health risks in the family include low educational attainment, poverty, unemployment or precarious working conditions and in particular a migration background. Health opportunities are also handed down from one generation to the next.

It is important for Switzerland to continue its advocacy of comprehensive health equality, as called for in the UN's pledge to "Leave no one behind". Switzerland has already introduced many of the conditions required to ensure that all children have the best health and life opportunities and to ensure their access to the health care system.

### Digital media – too little research into young children

Digital media can affect young people's well-being. However, there is still much we do not know about other impacts they may have on health, in particular their effects on young children. For this reason, in parallel to the National Health Report, a study, "Adele+", was conducted on the media use of pre-school age children and their health opportunities and risks. Even at this young age, a relationship can be shown between children's screen time and their body weight as well as sleeping problems.

With regard to health behaviour, the proportion of 15 year-olds who could remember at least one episode of binge drinking in a given month fell: in 2010, it was a third, in 2018 only a quarter. Since 2002 the share of 11 to 15 year-olds who smoke conventional cigarettes at least once a week has shown a downward trend too.

### **Cooperating and being connected – beyond the medical system**

Among observations made in the chapter on health care provision are the challenges that exist in the provision of outpatient paediatricians and of psychiatric-psychotherapeutic care. The transition from paediatric to adult care is not always smooth. Furthermore, in Switzerland only about 10% of children with a potential need for specialised palliative care actually receive it. In 2017, 7.9% of children and young people aged between 10 and 15 were young carers.

The care of children, young people and young adults takes place not only within the health care system but requires key persons from beyond the medical care system – from the education and social systems as well as families – to cooperate and be connected with one another. Coordination between the different services can simplify the transitions from childhood to adolescence to adulthood.

### **An important tool – health data**

In various areas of health, the database is insufficient to make scientifically based decisions. For example, it is assumed that myopia is growing worldwide, but due to a lack of data at national level, this trend cannot be assessed for Switzerland. The report recommends that such knowledge gaps be addressed. Health trends can only be assessed when information is gathered over a period of time – starting as early as possible, through lifelong monitoring. Such studies could enable the value of preventive measures taken in childhood and adolescence to be assessed in terms of outcomes in adult life.

Today, policy makers often have to make quick decisions for the future with little information from the past. To ensure that short-term decisions on children's and young people's health are science-based as early as possible, the National Health Report recommends that research be consciously oriented towards topics of the future; this should take place with the help of a committee of "Researchers on children's futures". This look into the future should be made by researchers across all sectors.

### **Data gaps should be filled**

The most important recommendations for action made by an expert committee based on the report's findings are as follows: fill the relevant data gaps and generate more knowledge so that specific issues (e.g. newly discovered risks from digital media) can be quickly assessed and rational decisions can be made. Only with precise and timely observations and analyses of change will it be possible to recognise new challenges for the health of the younger generation and to introduce appropriate measures. In conclusion, all areas of politics need to show continuous engagement and cooperation in favour of the younger generation's health.

The National Health Report 2020, "Health in Switzerland, children, young people and young adults" is published by the Swiss Health Observatory (Obsan), commissioned by the National Health Policy Dialogue, the permanent platform of the Confederation and cantons. The report is available free of charge at [www.gesundheitsbericht.ch](http://www.gesundheitsbericht.ch) in web publication and pdf format. The electronic versions are available in German and French and supplemented with an abridged Italian version. The book (344 pages, CHF 49.95) can be ordered from the publishing company ([www.hogrefe.ch](http://www.hogrefe.ch)) or from [www.obsan.ch](http://www.obsan.ch) (German or French).

**Swiss Health Observatory (publisher) (2020). Health in Switzerland – Children, young people and young adults The National Health Report 2020. Bern: Hogrefe Verlag.**

Chapter

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Three complementary reports on the topics of digital media, chronic diseases and disabilities as well as on health determinants are also now published at [www.obsan.ch](http://www.obsan.ch) (in German, summaries also in French).

Zumbrunn, A., Bachmann, N., Bayer-Oglesby, L., Meyer, S., Merki, M. & Robin, D. (2020). *Lebenswelten, Umweltfaktoren und gesellschaftliche Rahmenbedingungen als Gesundheitsdeterminanten bei Kindern, Jugendlichen und jungen Erwachsenen in der Schweiz. Literaturrecherche und Expertinnen-/Expertenbefragung* (Obsan Bericht 01/2020). Neuchâtel: Swiss Health Observatory  
[www.obsan.admin.ch/de/publikationen/lebenswelten-umweltfaktoren-und-gesellschaftliche-rahmenbedingungen-als](http://www.obsan.admin.ch/de/publikationen/lebenswelten-umweltfaktoren-und-gesellschaftliche-rahmenbedingungen-als)

Dratva, J., Ballmer, T., Gantschnig, B., Grylka-Bäschlin, S., Juvalta, S., Volken, T. & Zysset, A. (2020). *Chronische Krankheiten und Behinderungen bei Kindern, Jugendlichen und jungen Erwachsenen in der Schweiz* (Obsan Bericht 02/2020). Neuchâtel: Swiss Health Observatory  
[www.obsan.admin.ch/de/publikationen/chronische-krankheiten-und-behinderungen-bei-kindern-jugendlichen-und-jungen](http://www.obsan.admin.ch/de/publikationen/chronische-krankheiten-und-behinderungen-bei-kindern-jugendlichen-und-jungen)

Bernath, J., Waller, G. & Meidert, U. (2020). *ADELE+. Der Medienumgang von Kindern im Vorschulalter (4-6 Jahre). Chancen und Risiken für die Gesundheit* (Obsan Bericht 03/2020). Neuchâtel: Swiss Health Observatory  
[www.obsan.admin.ch/de/publikationen/adele-der-medienumgang-von-kindern-im-vorschulalter-4-6-jahre](http://www.obsan.admin.ch/de/publikationen/adele-der-medienumgang-von-kindern-im-vorschulalter-4-6-jahre)

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**New publication:**

Swiss Health Observatory (publisher) (2020). *Gesundheit in der Schweiz – Kinder, Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene. Nationaler Gesundheitsbericht 2020*. Bern: Verlag Hogrefe.

The report is available in German and French in book format and also as a pdf download:

[www.gesundheitsbericht.ch](http://www.gesundheitsbericht.ch)

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Further information and publication can be found in electronic format on the Obsan homepage [www.obsan.ch](http://www.obsan.ch)

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The Swiss Health Observatory (Obsan) is a common institution of the Confederation and the cantons. Obsan analyses the information available on health in Switzerland. It supports the federal government, cantons and other institutions involved in public health with their planning, decision making and implementation.



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