

Women's Health and Preventive Sexual Behaviour among Men and Women

This paper describes the state of health of Nunavik Inuit women and the sexual health profile of men and women as reported during the Nunavik Inuit Health Survey 2004. The results focus on the preventive attitude among women such as screening techniques of cervical and breast cancer and also on women's behaviour during pregnancy and their bone health status. It also concentrates on preventive sexual behaviours among men and women such as the number of sexual partners in the preceding year and the use of contraceptives.

More than four out of five Inuit adult women had a Pap test in the two years before the survey (82%), and 60% of them had one in the previous 12 months. The use of the Pap test is less frequent among adult women with lower levels of education. Among those who had never had a Pap test or had one two or more years before the survey, 41% of them claimed that this examination was not offered to them by their doctor. In terms of breast cancer examination, 43% of women declared having had a clinical breast examination performed by a health professional at least once, with 30% having had one in the previous two years.

In terms of behaviour during pregnancy, among those women who had given birth (77%), 30% breast-fed only, compared to 29% who bottle-fed and 40% who did a combination of the two. During their last pregnancy, 54% of women reported that they had taken pills to prevent iron deficiency and 49% to prevent vitamin deficiency. With respect to tobacco use and alcohol consumption during pregnancy, 65% smoked daily and 44% reported having drunk alcohol during their last pregnancy.

The evaluation of women's bone status revealed that 33% of them presented normal bone quality, 57% had osteopenia, which is a slight diminution of

bone quality compared to the results of young adults of same age and sex, and 10% had a diagnosis of osteoporosis.

Concerning preventive sexual behaviour among men and women, 46% of individuals declared that they had one partner during the year preceding the survey while 22% had two or more partners; this proportion was higher among men (25%) than women (19%). As for birth control practices, 34% used condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse. Use was more frequent among younger people (the 15- to 29-year-old group) than among respondents aged 30 and over. In general, nearly three out of ten individuals (28%) declared that they or their partner had usually used contraceptives within the last year.

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STATISTICAL ANALYSES

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