

The CDC released their annual report on emergency department (ED) care in the US. This report is based on 2004 visits from the National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NHAMCS) and the following ED statistics were notable.

Visit frequency

- Over 110 million visits were made in 2004, an increase of 18% over 10 years
- There were 38.2 visits per 100 persons, including one-fifth of all US adults in the past 12 months
- The total number of EDs in the US decreased by 12.4% over 10 years

Acuity measures

- Abdominal pain, chest pain and fever, all high-risk, were the most frequent chief complaints
- Medications were prescribed in three-quarters and procedures were performed in half of patients
- 15% arrived by ambulance
- 13% were admitted
- Of those classified, 15% of visits were emergent, 44% were urgent, 26% were semi-urgent and 15% were non-urgent

Overcrowding indices

- The mean time to see a physician was 47 minutes
- The mean time from arrival to admission or discharge was 3.3 hours
- About 2% left before being seen by a healthcare provider

To see a full copy of the report, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/ad/ad372.pdf>. For more information about the ED utilization from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Ambulatory Health Care, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhamcs.htm>.