

guts update

Growing Up
Today Study

2012

181 Longwood Avenue Boston, MA 02115

Dear GUTS mom,

OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS, we've been talking with lots of mothers of GUTS participants. Now that your children are older, we wanted to hear your thoughts about the study and what we can do to keep you and your "children" engaged. We were thrilled to discover that so many of you remain enthusiastic about the study and are willing to help however you can.

We're grateful for your continued support over the years. You and your children have made it possible to make many advances in what we know about how exposures, activities, and experiences during adolescence and into adulthood relate to short- and long-term health outcomes.

It's an exciting time for GUTS, with lots of changes afoot—read on to learn more. And if you have any thoughts, suggestions or comments, send us an email at guts@channing.harvard.edu. We love hearing from you!

Warm regards,
Stacey Missmer, ScD
GUTS Director



GUTS CHANGES

A HOST OF EXCITING new changes are happening at GUTS. We have:

- Merged GUTS 1 and GUTS 2 into a single cohort
- Created a single, shorter survey that will now be given yearly, which participants will be able to access from the new GUTS website
- Redesigned the GUTS logo to reflect the energy and increasing sophistication of participants as they enter adulthood
- Launched a new website (www.gutsweb.org), where participants can update their contact information, read answers to some FAQs, and learn about GUTS-related findings

WHAT THEY THINK, WHAT THEY SAID

LAST WINTER, WE INTERVIEWED 41 GUTS participants to learn about their experiences with the study. Here's a snapshot of some of the questions we asked and the responses we received.

In general, what do you like about being part of GUTS?

- The purpose and depth of the research
- Being part of a study that could benefit others
- The study furthers health/medical research
- Seeing the results afterwards

"I like being part of ongoing research into Americans and their lifestyles and how it is to grow up, and what we're doing well, and what we could be doing better with. I like being part of something that I feel has been beneficial to just everybody as a whole."

"I really like getting the letters back that give the actual data that's been collected. I think that's a really informative and neat thing to get."

"I like reading in the paper when the GUTS name comes up for Harvard researchers and knowing I was part of that study. That's very cool, that visibility."

Update your child's info

We know that many GUTS participants are on the move—and that this may mean new email or mailing addresses. We encourage you to urge your child to update his or her contact information by emailing us at guts@channing.harvard.edu. If you'd prefer, you can update it yourself by visiting <http://www.nhs2.org/gutsmoms/>.

Continued on the back page

Recent GUTS-related findings

THANKS TO YOU AND YOUR CHILD'S participation, researchers have been learning a lot about how behaviors influence health. Here's an overview of some recent findings:

Maternal influence on health-promoting behaviors

Adolescents were more likely to use sunscreen, quit smoking, and have Pap screening tests if their mothers encouraged them to do so.

Kahn JA, Huang B, Ding L, Geller A, Frazier AL. "Impact of maternal communication about skin, cervical, and lung cancer prevention on adolescent prevention behaviors." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 2011 49(1): 93-6.

Stress fractures

Higher vitamin D intake was associated with a lower risk of developing a stress fracture in female participants, especially among athletes who engage in a lot of high-impact sports.

Sonneville KR, Gordon CM, Kocher MS, Pierce LM, Ramappa A, Field AE. "Vitamin D, but not calcium, is associated with reduced stress fractures among female adolescents." *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine* 2012 (in press).

Eating disorders

Girls born in the fall were more likely to develop disordered eating behaviors such as frequent binge eating and purging, perhaps because they tended

to be among the oldest in their class according to school-year cutoffs.

Javaras KN, Austin SB, Field AE. "Season of birth and disordered eating in a population-based sample of young U.S. females." *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 2011 44(7):630-8.

Domestic violence

Boys who were exposed to violence in their homes before age 5 were more likely to be overweight or obese as adolescents.

Jun H-J, Corliss H, Boynton-Jarrett R, Spiegelman D, Austin S, Wright R. "Growing up in a domestic violence environment: relationship with developmental trajectories of body mass index during adolescence into young adulthood." *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 2011.

Depression

Female participants who reported depressive symptoms were more likely to start overeating or binge eating in the future. Similarly, overeating or binge eating also predicted development of depressive symptoms.

Skinner HH, Haines J, Austin SB, Field AE. "A prospective study of overeating, binge eating, and depressive symptoms among adolescent and young-adult women." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 2011 (in press).

Reproductive health

Lesbian, bisexual, and mostly heterosexual women were much less likely to have had a Pap test in the previous year than women who described themselves as completely heterosexual.

Charlton BM, Corliss HL, Missmer SA, Frazier AL, Rosario M, Kahn JA, Austin SB. "Reproductive health screening disparities and sexual orientation in a cohort study of U.S. adolescent and young adult females." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 2011 49(5): 505-10.

WHAT THEY THINK, WHAT THEY SAID Continued from the front page

Why do you fill out the surveys?

- The research is being done for a good purpose
- Filling out the survey is important for the study itself
- Parental pressure
- Feel invested in the study

"It's a part of me; it's something I've done since I was fairly young. And I feel like if I can be a part of a study like that, I should."

"I can view myself as a little bit of a minority for them. I'm a gay male, so I think I get to represent a group of the population that isn't always represented."

"I feel like I've done this for a very long time now. And I don't want to quit now because I sort of feel that maybe in many ways that voids all the time that I filled it out before."

"My mom's always on me about them. She's the one who got me into it. She's like 'You should do this.' I'm like, 'Okay.'"

Do you think you'll keep filling them out as long as we continue to send them?

"I feel that if I can continue to help out this research effort, I would like to. I realize how useful it is to have that data."

A couple of sensitive issues...

They need to tell us

Some mothers have gotten in touch with us to let us know that their now-adult children no longer wish to participate. While we appreciate the update, your child needs to communicate with us directly (by emailing guts@channing.harvard.edu) that they no longer wish to participate once they are 18 years old or older. We always follow up on your phone calls, emails, and letters with a letter to the GUTS participant to clarify how they would like to proceed, and make a note in our files to ensure we no longer bother you with paper mailings on your child's behalf.

Don't be TOO helpful

Some mothers have been perhaps too committed to the success of GUTS and may have helped their kids complete their questionnaires, especially when the children were younger. As you know from your dedication to Nurses' Health Study, the honest experience of each cohort member is crucial to ensure that our discoveries benefit public health. We hope that the changes we've made and will continue to make in response to feedback (yours and your children's) make it easier for GUTS participants to complete their surveys, and we are grateful for your help in encouraging them to do so!

CONTACT US

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"I definitely think I will. It would be a shame to break the data chain that's been going since 12+ years ago."

"I'll fill them out for the long term, sure. It takes so little time and I think the effort is worthwhile."