

Promoting Health for Older Adults

CDC works to help older adults remain healthy, active, and independent as long as possible.

The increase in the number of older adults in the United States is unprecedented. In 2016, 49 million US adults were 65 or older, representing 15% of the population. That number is expected to reach 71 million by 2030 and 98 million by 2060—when older adults will make up nearly 25% of the population.

Age brings a higher risk of chronic diseases such as dementias, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, arthritis, and cancer. These are the nation's leading drivers of illness, disability, deaths, and health care costs. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are most common in adults 60 and older, and the risk increases with age. In 2019, health care and long-term care costs associated with Alzheimer's and related dementias were \$290 billion, making them some of the costliest conditions to society.

CDC's [National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion](#) funds partners to improve the health of older adults by:

- Helping those with dementia remain active, independent, and involved in their community as long as possible.
- Providing resources to help caregivers stay healthy and deliver quality care to their care recipients.
- Increasing early assessment and diagnosis, risk reduction, and prevention and management of chronic diseases for people with or at risk for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.
- Increasing the use of other clinical preventive services like blood pressure checks, cancer screenings, and blood sugar testing.
- Increase the number of people who speak to a health care provider about their worsening memory.
- Providing CDC-recognized lifestyle change programs to Medicare beneficiaries through the National Diabetes Prevention Program (National DPP) to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes.
- Promoting physical activity programs to reduce the risk of dementia, arthritis pain and falls.

In the United States:



54 MILLION ADULTS
are 65 or older.



6 MILLION ADULTS
have Alzheimer's disease.



22 MILLION ADULTS
aged 65 or older
have arthritis.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

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Helping Older Adults With Dementia

Alzheimer's disease, the most common type of dementia, is an irreversible, progressive brain disease that affects nearly 6 million Americans. It is the fifth leading cause of death for those aged 65 or older. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias slowly destroy the brain, leading to cognitive declines (such as memory loss, language difficulty, or poor executive function) and functional declines (such as less ability to do activities of daily living and self-care). In some cases, dementias can lead to behavioral and personality changes (such as depression, paranoia, hallucinations, delusions, or agitation).

People with cognitive impairment find it hard to maintain their health or manage other chronic conditions. Early detection of cognitive decline, including Alzheimer's and other dementias, provides an opportunity to manage other chronic health conditions and plan for the future.

Surveillance and Resources

CDC's [Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program](#) works with partners and states to gather information on self-reported cognitive decline and caregiving among adults through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). To encourage using these data for action, CDC developed an [interactive data portal](#) and a series of [statistical briefs and infographics](#).

Healthy Brain Initiative and Public Health Road Maps

The [Healthy Brain Initiative](#) improves understanding of brain health as a central part of public health practice by:

- Creating and supporting partnerships.
- Collecting and reporting data.
- Supporting populations with high rates of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

The initiative also promotes the use of [State and Local Public Health Partnerships to Address Dementia, The 2018–2023 Road Map](#), and the [Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map for Indian Country](#). The Road Maps list public health actions to promote cognitive health, address cognitive impairment, and respond to the needs of caregivers.

Building Our Largest Dementia Infrastructure (BOLD)

The BOLD Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act was passed into law on December 31, 2018, Public Law 115-406. BOLD activities are designed to promote use of CDC's [Healthy Brain Initiative Road Maps](#). The BOLD Act:

- Establishes Alzheimer's and related dementias public health centers of excellence.
- Provides funds to support public health departments.
- Increases data analysis and timely reporting.

In 2020, CDC funded the first BOLD Public Health Centers of Excellence and BOLD Public Health Programs to strengthen the dementia infrastructure across the United States.

Providing Resources to Help Caregivers

In the United States, people are living longer, and dementia and other disabling chronic conditions are becoming more common. The need for caregivers, both informal (family and friends) and formal (paid professionals), will likely increase significantly as the population ages. Although caregiving may be rewarding, caregivers are at risk of increased stress, depression, unhealthy behaviors, and poor attention to their own health. Caregivers of people with dementia are at even higher risk, and they may delay dealing with their own health needs.

Informal or unpaid caregivers provide most of the long-term care in people's homes. According to 2015–2018 BRFSS data, about 20% of US adults aged 18 or older reported providing care or assistance to a person with a long-term illness or disability in the past 30 days. Four in five of these caregivers manage household tasks, such as finances or cleaning, and more than half help with personal care, such as bathing. In 2019, the value of this unpaid caregiving was an estimated \$244 billion.

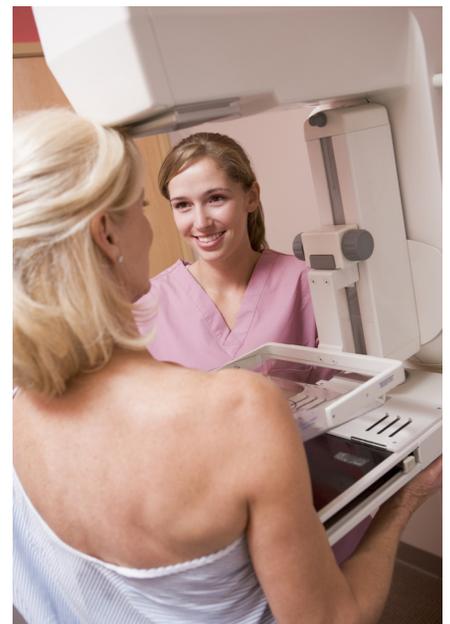
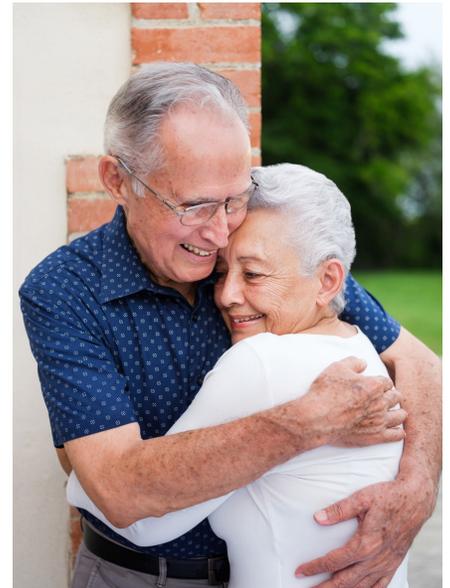
CDC worked with partners to develop an [action guide](#) for using REACH OUT, an evidence-based intervention designed to promote health and well-being among people who care for someone with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. CDC also created a guide for program developers, planners, and evaluators called [Assuring Healthy Caregivers. A Public Health Approach to Translating Research into Practice: The RE-AIM Framework](#).

Increasing the Use of Clinical Preventive Services

Clinical preventive services can prevent disease or find disease early, when treatment is more effective. These services include screenings for chronic conditions such as cancer, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes; immunizations for diseases such as flu and pneumonia; and counseling about personal health behaviors. The US Preventive Services Task Force provides a [complete list of all recommended services](#).

Increasing the use of preventive services by adults aged 50 or older is a key public health strategy, given the rapid aging of the US population. Unfortunately, only 25% of adults aged 50 to 64 and less than 50% of those 65 or older are up to date on these potentially life-saving services. CDC funds states, territories, and tribes to improve clinical preventive services by:

- Increasing chronic disease screening rates through the [Colorectal Cancer Control Program](#), the [National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early](#)





[Detection Program](#), and the [WISEWOMAN](#) program (which screens low-income women with little or no health insurance aged 45 to 64 for heart disease and stroke risk factors).

- Working with health care organizations to identify people with prediabetes and refer them to CDC-recognized organizations that offer the National DPP lifestyle change program. CDC's [Improving the Health of Americans Through Prevention and Management of Diabetes and Heart Disease and Stroke](#) program funds this and other work to prevent type 2 diabetes and improve health outcomes for people with diabetes through diabetes self-management education and support services.
- Working with health systems to increase team-based care for patients with high blood pressure and high cholesterol, including testing innovative ways to engage nonphysician team members through CDC's [Innovative State and Local Public Health Strategies to Prevent and Manage Diabetes and Heart Disease and Stroke](#) program.

Promoting Programs to Reduce Arthritis Pain and Prevent Falls

In the United States, 23% of all adults, or more than 54 million people, have arthritis. It is a leading cause of work disability, with annual costs for medical care and lost earnings of \$303.5 billion. CDC recommends several proven ways to help people manage arthritis symptoms:

- **Join a self-management education program**, such as the [Chronic Disease Self-Management Program](#), that teaches the skills and confidence to live well with arthritis every day.
- **Be active.** Physical activity, such as walking, bicycling, and swimming, decreases arthritis pain and improves function, mood, and quality of life. Better physical function reduces the risk of falls and fall-related injuries and helps older adults stay independent. Adults with arthritis should move more and sit less throughout the day. Getting at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week is recommended. However, any physical activity is better than none. [CDC-recognized physical activity programs](#) can help improve the health of participants with arthritis.
- **Maintain a healthy weight and protect your joints.** People can reduce their risk of knee osteoarthritis by controlling their weight. They can help prevent osteoarthritis by avoiding activities that are more likely to cause joint injuries.
- **Talk with a doctor.** Recommendations from health care providers can motivate people to be physically active and join a self-management education program. People with inflammatory arthritis (like rheumatoid arthritis) have a better quality of life if they are diagnosed early, receive treatment, and learn how to manage their condition.