

At A Glance 2015

Healthy Aging

Helping Older Americans Achieve Healthy and High-Quality Lives



Today, 45 million adults living in the United States—14% of the population—are 65 or older. By 2050, that number is expected to climb to about 80 million, or 20% of the population. This growth in the number and proportion of older adults is

unprecedented. Americans are living longer than ever before. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is at the forefront of the nation's efforts to prevent and control chronic diseases so that these added years translate into quality years.

Public Health Problem

Chronic diseases—such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes—account for most deaths in the United States, and Americans are at higher risk of these conditions as they age. In 2012, 63% of Medicare beneficiaries aged 65 to 74, 78% of those aged 75 to 84, and 83% of those aged 85 or older had multiple chronic conditions.

Age also brings with it a higher risk of dementia and infectious diseases:

- ◆ Alzheimer's disease is the 6th leading cause of death in the United States and the 5th leading cause for adults aged 65 or older.
- ◆ Infectious diseases such as flu and pneumonia affect older adults at higher rates than their younger counterparts. For example, during most flu seasons in the United States, an estimated 90% of flu-related deaths and 50% to 60% of flu-related illness occur in people aged 65 or older.

Much of the illness, disability, and premature death from these conditions can be prevented with healthier behaviors, more supportive environments, and better access to preventive health services.

Environmental and Social Supports

CDC's Healthy Aging Research Network has defined healthy aging as "the development and maintenance of optimal physical, mental (cognitive and emotional), spiritual, and social well-being and function in older adults."

Fast Facts

- ◆ Americans are at higher risk of chronic conditions—such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes—as they age.
- ◆ Much of the illness, disability, and premature death from these conditions is preventable.
- ◆ The prevalence of Alzheimer's disease is rising with the aging of the US population and is the 5th leading cause of death for people aged 65 or older.
- ◆ Less than half of adults aged 65 or older are up to date on clinical preventive services, such as cancer screenings.
- ◆ CDC supports a variety of public health strategies to promote the health and quality of life of older adults and the people who care for them.



National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Population Health



Research has shown that people can achieve healthy aging most easily when

- ◆ Physical environments and communities are safe and support attitudes and behaviors, such as regular walking, that promote health and well-being.
- ◆ Health services and community programs are used effectively to prevent or minimize the impact of acute and chronic disease on function.

Public health efforts for older adults are beginning to address the total spectrum of health. The value of this broader perspective is that it accounts for challenges such as confusion and memory loss, difficulty performing the activities of daily living, or isolation from friends and family.

Public Health Strategies

The most effective public health strategies for improving the health and quality of life of older adults are

- ◆ Promoting healthy environments and lifestyles.
- ◆ Closing gaps in the delivery of clinical preventive services.
- ◆ Meeting the needs of older adults with cognitive impairment and their caregivers.

Promoting Healthy Environments and Lifestyles

Despite the benefits of being physically active, one-third of older adults do not get regular physical activity. People who are physically active, eat a healthy diet, and do not use tobacco decrease their risk of developing heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and other chronic conditions.

Healthy communities are those that make it easier for people to pursue healthy behaviors. For example, in communities that provide safe walking and biking trails, residents are more likely to get out and walk or bike regularly.

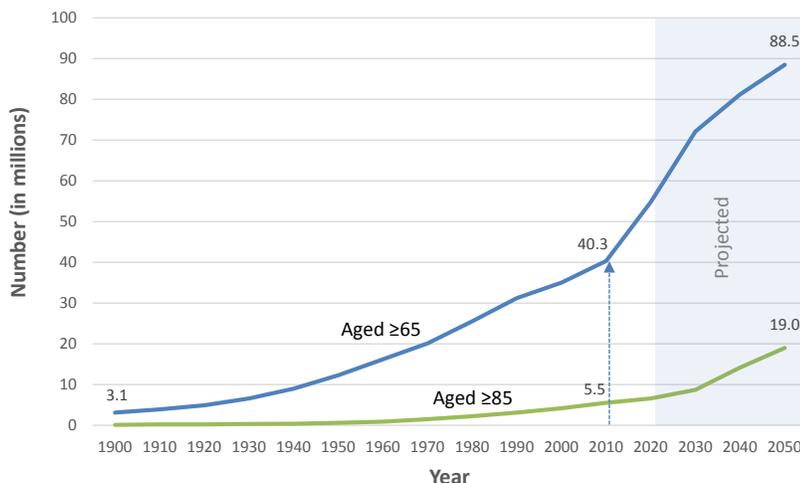
A New Measure to Help Close the Gap in Preventive Services

CDC has developed an innovative measure to help close the gap in preventive service delivery for older Americans. This composite measure, known as the “up-to-date measure,” quickly and easily describes the extent to which men and women are up to date on a selected set of clinical preventive services. The measure is analogous to the one commonly used to report the percentage of children up to date with pediatric immunizations.

For men and women aged 65 or older, the measure includes flu and pneumonia immunizations and colorectal cancer screening. For women, breast cancer screening is also measured.

The measure provides a practical summary score that helps public health professionals and others identify gaps, assess disparities, and gauge progress in ensuring that older adults receive these potentially life-saving services. It is also being used as a measure of progress in meeting the Healthy People 2020 national health objectives.

Population Aged ≥65 and ≥85 Years, United States, 1900-2010 and Projected 2020-2050



Source: Older Americans 2012: Key Indicators of Well-Being. Washington, DC: Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics; 2012.



Closing Gaps in the Delivery of Clinical Preventive Services

Clinical preventive services, including cancer screenings and immunizations for flu and pneumonia, can prevent disease or find disease early, when treatment is more effective. Greater use of these services could prevent thousands of deaths among older Americans each year. However, only about one-third of adults aged 50 to 64 and less than half of those aged 65 or older are up to date on a selected set of recommended screenings and immunizations.

Meeting the Needs of Older Adults with Cognitive Impairment and Their Caregivers

Cognitive impairment, defined as a decline in the ability to think, concentrate, and remember, affects the health of millions of older adults. Moderate or severe impairment can also have a substantial impact on their families. In most cases, family members care for people with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias. Given longer lifespans and the growing prevalence of such conditions, the need for caregivers, both informal (e.g., family members) and formal, will likely increase significantly as the US population ages.

CDC's Response

CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP) works in four key areas or domains: epidemiology and surveillance, environmental approaches, health care system interventions, and community programs linked to clinical services. This comprehensive approach supports healthy choices and behaviors, makes healthier options more available, and helps Americans better manage their health.

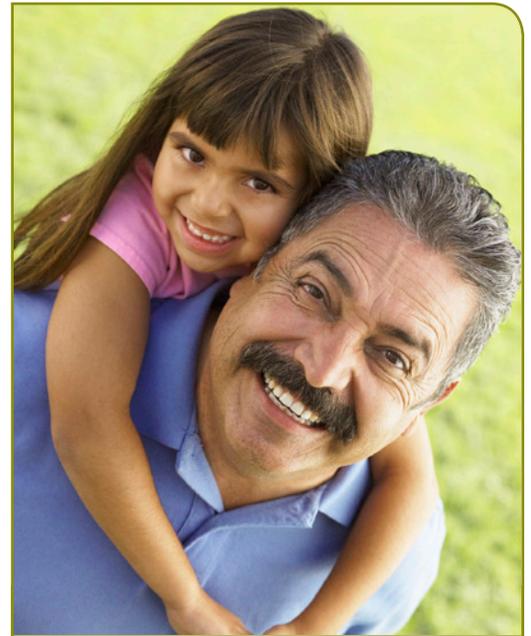
CDC works with partners—such as public health and aging services professionals, other federal agencies, academia, and community organizations—to improve the health of older adults. With \$3.3 million

CDC Supports Public Health Work on Cognitive Health

In 2013, an estimated 5 million Americans aged 65 or older had Alzheimer's disease. By 2050, the prevalence may almost triple unless better ways to detect and treat the disease are found.

To help states and communities promote cognitive health, CDC, in collaboration with the Alzheimer's Association and other partners, released [*The Healthy Brain Initiative: The Public Health Road Map for State and National Partnerships, 2013–2018*](#). This Road Map identifies 35 actions that state and local public health agencies and their partners can take to promote cognitive health and address cognitive impairment and the needs of caregivers.

In 2015, for example, 35 states added the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Cognitive Decline module to their surveys, and 24 states added the BRFSS Caregiver Module.



in FY 2015 funding, CDC's Healthy Aging Program supports these efforts by focusing its activities in three of NCCDPHP's four domains: epidemiology and surveillance, environmental approaches, and community programs linked to clinical services.

Epidemiology and Surveillance

CDC works with partners and states to gather information on the prevalence of self-reported "increased confusion or memory loss" among adults aged 45 or older. CDC also supports partners and states to gather information on caregiver burden, through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. States use this information to develop or guide state plans, increase awareness about the needs of these populations, and guide other efforts, such as elder justice and emergency preparedness for older adults.

Environmental Approaches

A key factor in the health of older adults is their mobility, defined as the ability to move around effectively and safely in their environment.

CDC promotes recommended strategies from the Guide to Community Preventive Services, such as creating inviting indoor and outdoor spaces where older adults can walk, be physically active, and get from place to place. Good street lighting, safe and easily walkable streets and trails, and accessible public transportation are among the community features that help to ensure that older adults can remain active and engaged in their communities.

To enhance mobility for older adults, CDC is addressing "wayfinding," a relatively new area of public health. Wayfinding is the process by which people find their way from place to place, whether outdoors on streets and sidewalks, or indoors, such as in public buildings. Being able to find one's way is an essential part of everyday life that makes it possible to move about and engage comfortably in community settings.

Community Programs Linked to Clinical Services

Expanding the availability of places to get clinical services beyond clinical settings is a promising public health strategy for increasing the use of these services to meet current screening and immunization recommendations.

To help states and communities broaden access points for the delivery of preventive services, CDC has supported the development of a [strategic framework](#) that examines the integration of clinical preventive services across clinical and community care delivery systems and identifies the necessary participants, their roles in care delivery, and the required infrastructure, support, and policies.

Essential stakeholders are clinicians, community organizations, policy makers, support personnel, funders, and purchasers. When these partners work together, older adults have the best chance to receive recommended chronic disease screenings and immunizations.

Future Directions

CDC will continue to

- ◆ Build the science for cognitive health by supporting state data collection on (1) self-reported cognitive decline and its consequences and (2) the prevalence and characteristics of caregivers and care recipients in the United States.
- ◆ Develop and test public health messaging about cognitive health and impairment through CDC's Healthy Brain Research Network.
- ◆ Develop timely public health messages about cognitive decline that align with the current state of the science.
- ◆ Improve understanding of cognitive aging and strategies to maintain and promote cognitive health by supporting the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine report, *Cognitive Aging*.
- ◆ Monitor the use of clinical preventive services among older adults and disseminate information about community strategies to promote the use of these services.



For more information, contact

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