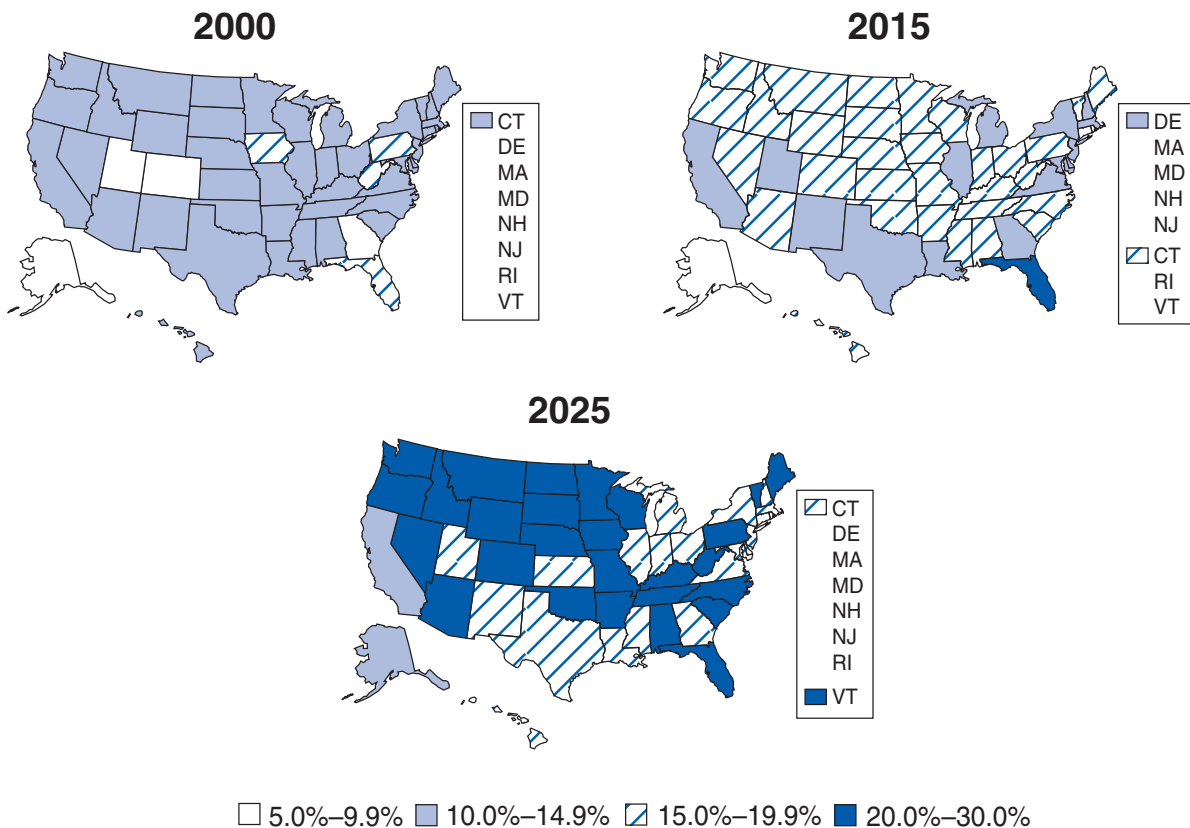


Healthy Aging

Preventing Disease and Improving Quality of Life Among Older Americans 2005

Percentage of U.S. Population Aged 65 or Older



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

“The aging of the population is one of the major public health challenges of the 21st century. With more than 70 million baby boomers in the United States poised to join the ranks of those aged 65 or over, the prevention of diseases and injuries is one of the few tools available to reduce the expected growth of health care and long-term care costs.”

*Julie Louise Gerberding, MD, MPH
Director
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The Health and Economic Effects of an Aging Society

One hundred years ago, only 3 million people in this country were over the age of 65. Today, more than 33 million Americans are in this age group, and that number is expected to double over the next 25 years, as baby boomers age. In addition, the seniors of the future will be even more racially and ethnically diverse than today's seniors.

The aging of America is triggering a huge demand for health care and social services. Health care expenditures for a 65-year-old are now four times those for a 40-year-old. Because the population will be older and greater in number, overall U.S. health care expenditures are projected to increase 25% by 2030.

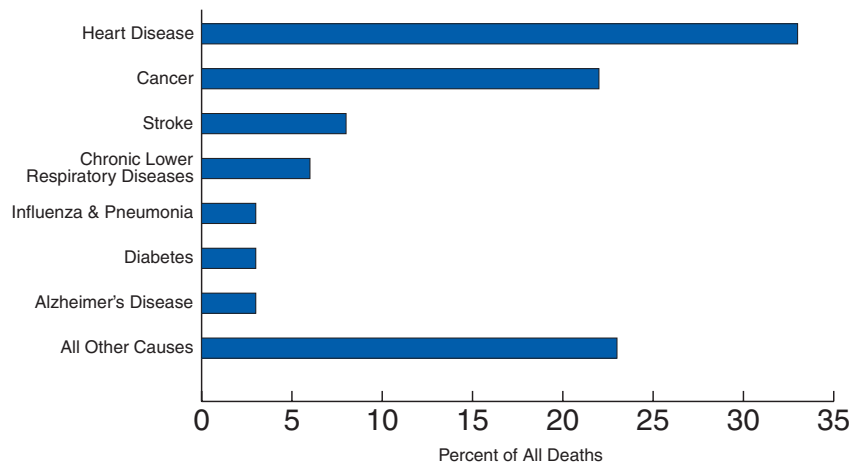
At least 80% of seniors have at least one chronic condition, and 50% have at least two. These conditions can cause years of pain, disability, and loss of function. About 12 million seniors living at home report that chronic conditions limit their activities. Three million older adults say they cannot perform basic activities of daily living, such as bathing, shopping, dressing, or eating. Their quality of life suffers as a result, and demands on family and caregivers can be challenging.

Opportunities to Improve Older Americans' Health and Quality of Life

Poor health and loss of independence are *not* inevitable consequences of aging. The following strategies have proven effective in promoting the health of older adults:

- *Healthy lifestyles.* Research has shown that healthy lifestyles are more influential than genetic factors in helping older people avoid the deterioration traditionally associated with aging. People who are physically active, eat a healthy diet, do not use tobacco, and practice other healthy behaviors reduce their risk for chronic diseases and have half the rate of disability of those who do not.
- *Early detection of diseases.* Screening to detect chronic diseases early in their course, when they are most treatable, can save many lives; however, many older adults have not had recommended screenings. For example, 60% of Americans aged 65 or older have not had a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy in the previous 5 years to screen for colorectal cancer, even though Medicare covers the cost.
- *Immunizations.* Approximately 36,000 people aged 65 or older die each year of influenza and invasive pneumococcal

Causes of Death Among U.S. Adults Aged 65 or Older, 2001



Source: CDC, National Center for Health Statistics. *National Vital Statistics Report*, 2002.

Preventing health problems is one of the few known ways to stem rising health care costs. By preventing disease and injury, we also can help seniors remain independent for as long as possible, which can improve their quality of life and delay the need for costly long-term care. A recent trend is encouraging: in the last two decades, rates of nursing home use have declined.

disease. Immunizations reduce a person's risk for hospitalization and death from these diseases. Yet in 2002, 32% of Americans aged 65 or older had not had a recent flu shot, and 37% had never received a pneumonia vaccine.

- *Injury prevention.* Falls are the most common cause of injuries to older adults. More than one-third of adults aged 65 or older fall each year, and of those who fall, 20%–30% suffer moderate to severe injuries that decrease mobility and independence. Removing tripping hazards in the home and installing grab bars are simple measures that can greatly reduce older Americans' risk for falls and fractures.
- *Self-management techniques.* Programs to teach older Americans self-management techniques can reduce both the pain and costs of chronic disease. For example, the Arthritis Self-Help Course, disseminated by the Arthritis Foundation, has been shown to reduce arthritis pain by 20% and visits to physicians by 40%. Unfortunately, less than 1% of Americans with arthritis participate in such programs, and courses are not available in many areas.

CDC's Roles in Promoting Healthy Aging

CDC is committed to ensuring that all people achieve their optimal lifespan with the best possible quality of health in every stage of life. With a number of important new health impact goals, CDC is setting the agenda to enable the American people to enjoy a healthy life by delaying death and the onset of illness and disability. In addition, CDC works to eliminate disparities by accelerating improvements for those at the greatest risk of poor health.

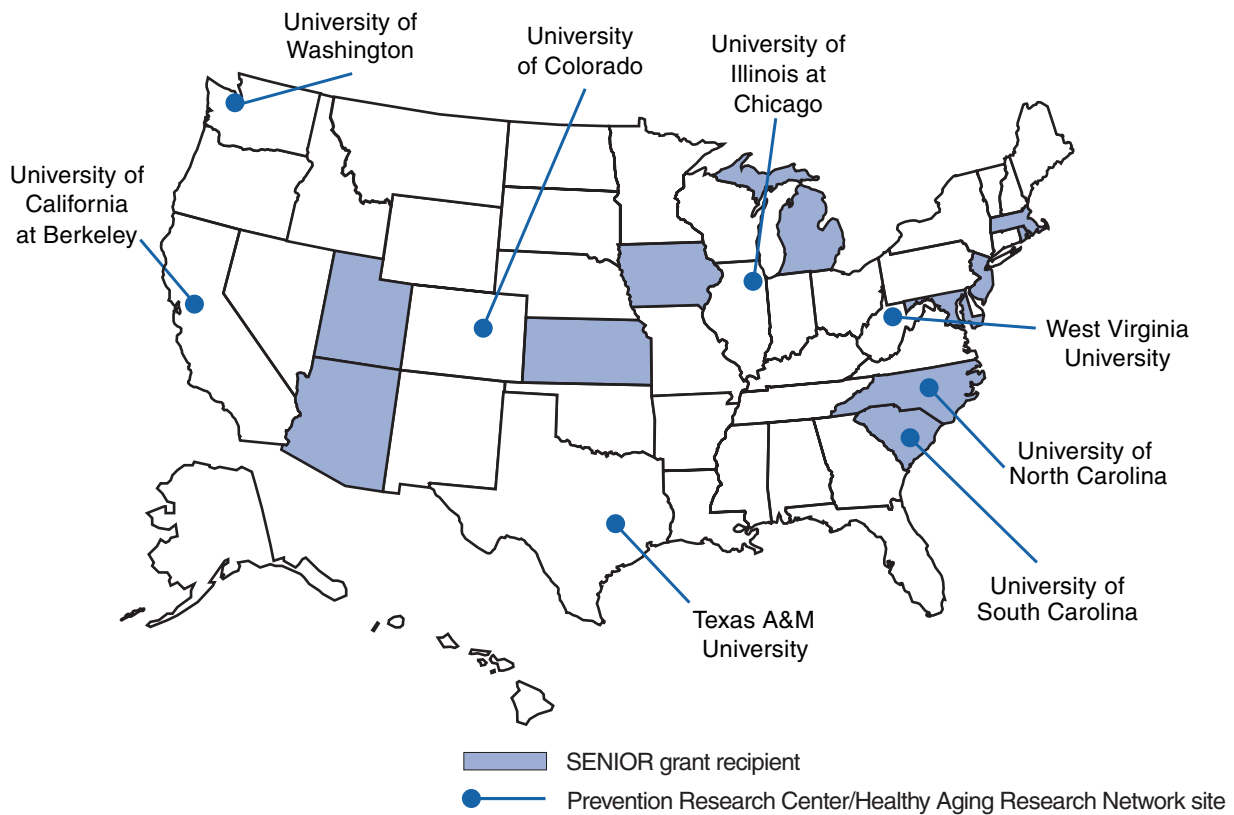
Within CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, the Healthy Aging Program serves as the focal point for older adult health. The Healthy Aging Program is engaged in several activities designed to provide a comprehensive approach to health promotion and disease prevention for older adults. It also has developed five ways to implement this approach.

1. *Providing high-quality health information.* CDC provides reliable, science-based, high-quality information on the health of seniors for policy makers, public health and aging professionals, the media, and consumers through publications, conferences, training sessions, and Web sites/listservs. CDC regularly updates its Healthy Aging Web site (<http://www.cdc.gov/aging>), which provides information

to health and aging professionals and the public. Working with the American Society on Aging, CDC also engages journalists across the country on relevant issues such as diabetes, West Nile virus, and hospital infections.

2. *Supporting health care providers and organizations in their prevention efforts.* Medicare pays for selected preventive services, yet fewer than 1 in 10 adults aged 65 or older have received all recommended screenings and immunizations. CDC evaluated the Sickness Prevention Achieved through Regional Collaboration (SPARC) and found that it can broaden the use of preventive services among seniors. Operating in selected counties of New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, SPARC serves as a local bridge between health care and public health. It does not provide direct services, but rather enhances the provision of preventive services (e.g., immunizations, disease screenings) within medical practices, promotes public access to services, and helps establish local accountability for service delivery. SPARC also established a model mechanism for rapidly assessing community needs and redistributing vaccines when supplies run low, ensuring broader access for populations at risk.

Selected CDC-Supported Healthy Aging Programs, 2005



3. *Integrating public health prevention expertise with the Administration on Aging's (AOA) aging services network.* As described in the Older Americans Act, CDC has an advisory role to the aging services network, which reaches seniors in virtually every U.S. community where they live and congregate. To take full advantage of opportunities to improve the health of older adults, CDC strives to integrate public health's expertise in research, health tracking, and programs with the experience and reach of the aging services network. For instance, CDC and AOA worked together on the Aging States Project, which identified aging issues important to state units on aging and state health departments. The project staff found that all states could benefit from additional resources and more opportunities to collaborate. In response, CDC and AOA funded 24 grants to promote partnerships between state health departments and state units on aging in fiscal years 2003 and 2004. In fiscal year 2005, CDC and AOA continued the State-based Examples of Network Innovation, Opportunity, and Replication (SENIOR) grants program by funding 11 state collaboratives. Funded topic areas include physical activity, clinical preventive services, chronic disease self-management, and oral health.

4. *Identifying and putting into practice what works in prevention.* Research shows that if seniors maintain just three healthy habits—moderate physical activity, good nutrition, and no smoking—they can delay disability by as much as 10 years. The benefits of such research, however, will never be realized unless this knowledge is applied to programs in communities. CDC funds many programs that are helping communities reap the benefits of prevention research. For example, eight of CDC's Prevention Research Centers formed a Healthy Aging Research Network, which is collaborating on in-depth, evidence-based reviews and statements of the role of public health in addressing physical activity and depression for older adults.

5. *Monitoring changes in the health of older Americans.* CDC is the lead national agency responsible for collecting data and monitoring changes over time in the health of older Americans. This information helps strengthen efforts to prevent disease, disability, and injury. These data are also needed to identify health-related disparities among different groups of older adults and to create culturally appropriate, targeted interventions. CDC

recently released *The State of Aging and Health in America 2004*, which was developed with the Merck Institute of Aging & Health and The Gerontological Society of America. This report provides national and state data on 15 key indicators related to older adult health status, health risk

behaviors, injuries, and preventive care and screening. It also rates the nation and the states on how well they are meeting *Healthy People 2000* targets for improving the health of older adults. In addition, the report includes examples of successful strategies for improving the health and quality of life of older adults.

Future Directions

State and local health departments, the aging services network, and organizations that serve older adults are looking to CDC for scientific and programmatic expertise in strategies that reduce long-term care needs and preserve health and quality of life for seniors. In response to these needs, CDC and its partners will

- Promote the use of evidence-based strategies and programs related to health promotion and disease prevention for older adults.
- Provide data on the health status and health behaviors of older adults in the United States, such as *The State of Aging and Health in America 2004*, to help monitor health trends and outcomes.
- Expand communication efforts to promote healthy lifestyles among older adults.

Myth
Health inevitably declines as we get older.

Reality
People of any age can improve their health by adopting healthy behaviors.

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