

Center for Disease Control's National Center for Health Statistics Healthy People 2010

Assess the progress of The Healthy People 2010 goal to increase the quality and years of healthy life in the US by measuring expected years in good or better health, expected years free of activity limitation, and expected years free of selected chronic diseases.

Lead Agency:

Center for Disease Control's National Center for Health Statistics-Office of Analysis and Epidemiology

Agency Mission:

The mission of the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is to provide statistical information that will guide actions and policies to improve the health of the American people. As the Nation's principal health statistics agency, NCHS leads the way with accurate, relevant, and timely data.

Principal Investigator:

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General Description:

The concept of healthy life expectancy reflects the fact that not all years of a person's life are lived in perfect health. As the prevalence of chronic disease and disability tend to increase with age, a population with a higher life expectancy may not actually be the healthiest.

One of the goals of Healthy People 2010 is to increase the quality and years of healthy life in the US. Progress towards this goal is assessed by 3 healthy life expectancy measures: expected years in good or better health; expected years free of activity limitation; and expected years free of selected chronic diseases. These measures can provide an indication of expected years of healthy life remaining at birth or other ages such as 55 years, 65 years, or 85 years.

Analysis completed for the Healthy People 2010 Midcourse Review revealed a slight overall increase in both expected years remaining in good or better health and years free

of activity limitation at birth and at age 65, and an overall decrease in expected years remaining free of selected chronic conditions at birth and at age 65; gender and racial differences were present in all three of these measures. Future plans include the development of additional measures, focus on additional domains including mental health and health behaviors, and improving the understanding and interpretation of healthy life expectancy.

The use of healthy life expectancy in Healthy People 2010 was recently presented to the European Commission's Task Force on Health Expectancies. Plans for continued discussions on international comparability between the US and European measures are in progress.

Excellence: What makes this project exceptional?

There is currently no consensus on how to measure the quality and years of healthy life.

Significance: How is this research relevant to older persons, populations and/or an aging society?

The concept of healthy life expectancy reflects the fact that not all years of a person's life are lived in perfect health. As the prevalence of chronic disease and disability tend to increase with age, a population with a higher life expectancy may not actually be the healthiest.

Effectiveness: What is the impact and/or application of this research to older persons?

If healthy life expectancy is increasing more quickly than general life expectancy within the population, then the aging population is living a greater portion of life free of chronic diseases and disabilities. If not, then education of policy makers could result in re-allocation of resources to promote a healthier life at later stages.

Innovativeness: Why is this research exciting or newsworthy?

This research provides the opportunity for international comparability between the healthy life expectancy measures being used in the US and by the European Commission.