

The State of
Aging and
Health
in America
2007

Executive
Summary





The State of Aging and Health in America 2007

The State of Aging and Health in America 2007 is the fifth volume of a series that presents a snapshot of the health and aging landscape in the United States and other regions of the world. This series presents the most current information and statistics, often specifically commissioned for the report, on the health of older adults. *The State of Aging and Health* reports are supported by The Merck Company Foundation and produced with various partner organizations that are recognized as leaders in the aging field.

Suggested Citation:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and The Merck Company Foundation.
The State of Aging and Health in America 2007.
Whitehouse Station, NJ: The Merck Company Foundation; 2007.

Available at www.cdc.gov/aging and www.merck.com/cr
An interactive version of *The State of Aging and Health in America 2007* report is available online
at www.cdc.gov/aging

Forward



“Entirely supported by Merck & Co., Inc., The Merck Company Foundation is a philanthropic organization that strives to enhance the health and well-being of people around the world. As demonstrated by Merck’s century-long commitment to the *Merck Manuals*, this includes getting health information into the hands of everyone who needs it. *The State of Aging and Health in America 2007* is part of that effort. The report presents information and recommendations to help older Americans live not just longer but better lives. In terms of transforming the promise of active aging into reality in America, this publication shows us where we are, where we must go and, through its thoughtful calls to action, how to get there.”

– Steven B. Kelmar, President, The Merck Company Foundation



“The aging of the U.S. population is one of the major public health challenges we face in the 21st century. One of CDC’s highest priorities as the nation’s health protection agency is to increase the number of older adults who live longer, high-quality, productive, and independent lives. *The State of Aging and Health in America 2007* is an important tool for supporting this goal. This report identifies key older adult health issues, assesses our success in addressing them, and provides suggestions and resources for further action. CDC values its role as a contributor to this report and looks forward to working with our partners to achieve better health and quality of life for all older Americans.”

– Julie Louise Gerberding, MD, MPH, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



Executive Summary

Twentieth-century advances in protecting and promoting health among older adults have given us many opportunities for overcoming the challenges of an aging society. The health indicators presented in *The State of Aging and Health in America 2007* highlight these opportunities. By working to meet the goals for each of these key indicators, our nation can help to ensure that all of its citizens can look forward not just to living longer, but to living well.

The State of Aging and Health in America 2007 provides a snapshot of our nation's progress in promoting the health and well-being of older adults and reducing behaviors that contribute to premature death and disability. The report also highlights three key areas that can significantly improve the quality of life for older adults: reducing falls, maintaining cognitive health, and improving end-of-life care.

Demographic changes create an urgent need

Improved medical care and prevention efforts have contributed to dramatic increases in life expectancy in the United States over the past century. They also have produced a major shift in the leading causes of death for all age groups, including older adults, from infectious diseases and acute illnesses to chronic diseases and degenerative illnesses. Currently, about 80% of older Americans are living with at least one chronic condition.

The growth in the number and proportion of older adults is unprecedented in the history of the United States. Two factors—longer life spans and aging baby boomers—will combine to double the population of Americans aged 65 and older during the next 25 years. By 2030, there will be 71 million American older adults accounting for roughly 20% of the U.S. population.

America's older adult population also is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. At the same time, the health status of racial and ethnic minorities lags far behind that of

non-minority populations. The burden of many chronic diseases and conditions—especially high blood pressure, diabetes and cancer—varies widely by race and ethnicity. Data from the 2004 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) indicated that 39% of non-Hispanic white adults aged 65 years or older reported very good or excellent health, compared with 24% of non-Hispanic blacks and 29% of Hispanics.⁽⁵⁾

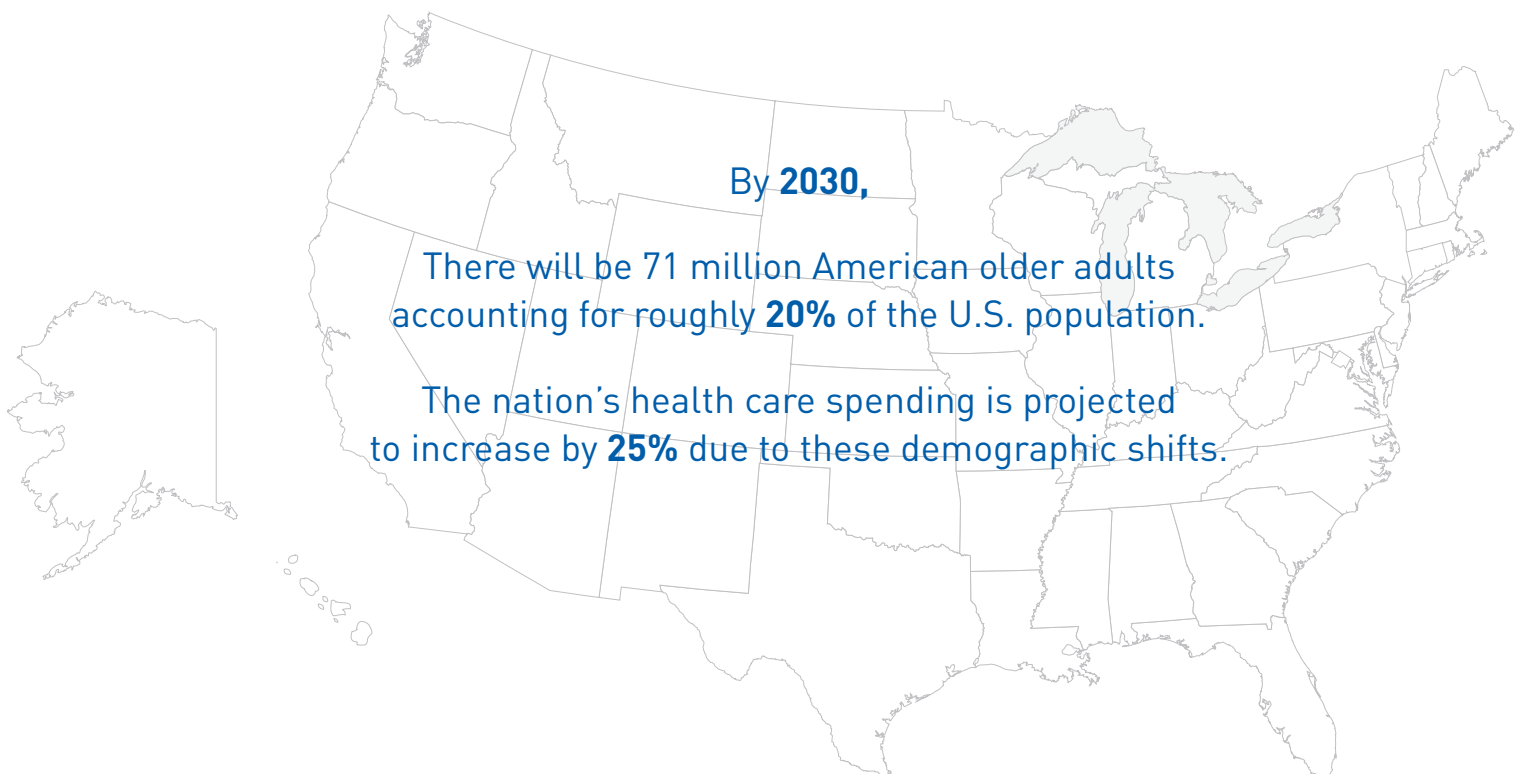
There is a strong economic incentive for action

The cost of providing health care for an older American is three to five times greater than the cost for someone younger than 65. As a result, by 2030, the nation's health care spending is projected to increase by 25% due to these demographic shifts.

More than one-third of U.S. deaths are preventable

Three behaviors—smoking, poor diet, and physical inactivity—were the root causes of almost 35% of U.S. deaths in 2000. These behaviors are risk factors that often underlie the development of the nation's leading chronic disease killers: heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes.

The above statistics highlight the need to focus on improving the health of older adults by encouraging them to adopt healthier behaviors and obtain regular health screenings that can reduce the risk for many chronic diseases, help decrease health disparities, and lower health care costs.



The Report Cards

The National Report Card on Healthy Aging (page 9) reports on 15 indicators of older adult health, 11 of which are identified by the Healthy People 2010 initiative of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Those 15 indicators are grouped into four areas: Health Status, Health Behaviors, Preventive

Care and Screening, and Injuries. The report also assigns a “met” or “not met” grade (based on 2003 or 2004 data) to those indicators with specific Healthy People 2010 targets. Taken together, these indicators present a comprehensive picture of older adult health in the United States.

The United States has met 4 of the 11 Healthy People 2010 targets — six years ahead of schedule . . .

- Mammograms within past two years (75% vs. goal of 70%)
- Colorectal cancer screenings (63% vs. goal of 50%)
- Cholesterol checked within the past five years (90% vs. goal of 80%)
- People currently smoking (9% vs. goal of 12%)

But has more room for improvement on the remaining Healthy People 2010 targets . . .

- Oral Health: Complete tooth loss (21% vs. goal of 20%)
- No leisure time physical activity in past month (32% vs. goal of 20%)
- Obesity (20% vs. goal of 15%)
- Flu vaccine in past year (68% vs. goal of 90%)
- Pneumonia vaccine (65% vs. goal of 90%)
- Hip fracture hospitalizations per 100,000 persons (558 men/1113 women vs. goal of 474 men/416 women)
- Eating at least five fruits and vegetables daily (The 2010 nutrition target is segmented into multiple goals for different fruits and vegetables, but the current national percentage of 29.8% is below all of the 2010 nutrition targets.)

The State-by-State Report Card on Healthy Aging (page 22) ranks the 50 states and the District of Columbia (D.C.) for each health indicator, and assigns each a grade according to its performance relative to the other states. Hawaii, for example, was most often ranked among the five top performing states (eight times), while Kentucky was most often ranked in the bottom five (nine times).

Variation among states can be significant. For example, Connecticut ranked first in the oral health indicator, with only 12.4% of older adults having lost all of their teeth, while West Virginia ranked last in this category, with 42.9% of older adults experiencing complete tooth loss.

The vast majority of states are well ahead of schedule on four health indicators . . .

- Mammograms 46 states and D.C. met the 2010 target
- Colorectal cancer screenings 49 states and D.C. met the 2010 target
- Cholesterol screenings 50 states and D.C. met the 2010 target
- People currently smoking 46 states and D.C. met the 2010 target

Yet all states have more work to do on the other indicators . . .

- No leisure time physical activity in past month 0 states met the 2010 target
- Flu vaccine in past year 0 states met the 2010 target
- Pneumonia vaccine 0 states met the 2010 target
- Eating fruit and vegetables daily 0 states met the 2010 target
- Obesity 3 states met the 2010 target
- Oral Health: complete tooth loss 21 states and D.C. met the 2010 target
- Hip fracture hospitalizations per 100,000 persons No data for states available

Opportunities for Enhancing Quality of Life

The State of Aging and Health in America 2007 report focuses on several areas of concern that, if effectively addressed, will significantly improve the quality of life for older adults.

Preventing cognitive decline; Addressing end-of-life issues (page 5)

As more and more Americans reach the age of 65, society is increasingly challenged to help them grow old with dignity and comfort. *The State of Aging and Health in America 2007* report identifies the prevention of cognitive decline and alleviation of end-of-life suffering as key areas where the public health arena can help make significant improvements in quality of life. Meeting these challenges is critical to ensuring that baby boomers can look forward to their “golden years.” The report states that through research and education about cognitive health, and public education about end-of-life issues, both challenges can be effectively addressed.

Reducing falls among older adults (page 26)

Falls are the leading cause of injury deaths and the most common cause of injuries and hospital admissions for trauma among adults aged 65 or older. Fall-related injuries cause significant mortality, disability, loss of independence, and early admission to nursing homes. Fractures are among

the most prevalent fall injuries. Each year, 360,000–480,000 older adults sustain fall-related fractures. Fall-related injuries also create a significant financial burden for the United States.

Research has shown that many falls can be prevented by addressing personal risk factors (such as monitoring medications, improving balance, and correcting vision problems) and environmental risk factors (such as removing tripping hazards and installing safety features such as handrails).

Innovative Approaches

Many states and communities have developed innovative ways to ensure that key information on the health of older adults is readily available to those who need it for planning programs, setting priorities, and tracking trends. This report highlights two such programs:

- [Orange County, California’s Condition of Older Adults report series](#)—a comprehensive, user-friendly snapshot of the general health and well-being of the county’s older residents.
- [The Missouri Senior Report](#)—a document that provides county-level data and other information to help state and local policy makers, service providers, and seniors themselves plan for future needs.

» CALLS TO ACTION »

The State of Aging and Health in America 2007 report presents several Calls to Action intended to encourage individuals, professionals, and communities to take specific steps to improve the health and well-being of older adults. They include the following recommendations:

- » **Address health disparities among older adults, particularly in racial and ethnic minority populations.** (page 3)
- » **Encourage people to communicate their wishes about end-of-life care.** (page 6)
- » **Improve the oral health of older adults.** (page 11)
- » **Increase physical activity among older adults by promoting environmental changes.** (page 12)

- » **Increase adult immunizations, particularly in racial and ethnic minority populations.** (page 15)
- » **Increase screening for colorectal cancer.** (page 16)
- » **Prevent falls, a leading cause of hospitalization and injury deaths among older adults.** (page 32)

The State of Aging and Health in America 2007 report highlights the need to maintain the progress made in several health indicators, while increasing efforts to meet the goals on other equally crucial health issues. The key to improving the health and quality of life for all older Americans, the report shows, will be collaboration between multiple and diverse groups on the national, state and local levels, including members of the public, health care providers, government agencies and community groups.



The State of Aging and Health in America 2007

Acknowledgements

Advisory Board Members

David Baldrige, PhD
*Executive Director
American Association for
International Aging*

William F. Benson
*Principal
Health Benefits ABCs*

Yanira Cruz, MPH
*President and CEO
The National Hispanic Council
on Aging*

Karyne Jones
*President and CEO
The National Caucus and
Center on Black Aged*

Bob Meyers
*President
National Press Foundation*

Judy Salerno, MD, MS
*Deputy Director
National Institute on Aging,
National Institutes of Health*

Mary E. Tinetti, MD
*Director
Yale Program on Aging*

Project Co-Directors

Margaret J. Moore, MPH
*Public Health Advisor
Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention*

Andrée C. Harris
*Public Health Analyst
Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention*

Leslie M. Hardy, MHS
*Vice President
The Merck Company Foundation*

Michele Patrick, MGA
Consultant

Principal Writers

Lisa Jeannotte, MA
Consultant

Margaret J. Moore, MPH
*Public Health Advisor
Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention*

Falls Working Group Members

Bonita Lynn Beattie, PT, MPT, MHA
*Vice President
Research and Demonstrations
National Council on Aging*

Catherine Gordon
*Senior Public Health Analyst
Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention*

Margaret J. Moore, MPH
*Public Health Advisor
Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention*

Judy A. Stevens, PhD
*Epidemiologist
Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention*

Special thanks to:
CDC Foundation

Contributors

Barb Alberson, MPH
Bill Elder, PhD
Tracy Ellingson
Anne Esdale, MPH
Helen Grange
Linda Hale
Julie D. Kosteads, MPH
Tricia Schlechte
Rhonda Siegel

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Lindsay Abraham, MPH
Lynda A. Anderson, PhD
Brian Armour, PhD
Julie Bolen, PhD, MPH
Cynthia Crocker
Amanda Crowell
Kristine Day, MPH
Clark Denny, PhD
Cynthia Gelb
Barbara F. Gooch, DMD, MPH
Cheryl Holiness, MS
Rosemarie Kobau, MPH
Judy Kruger, PhD, MS
Jason E. Lang, MPH, MS
Louise Murphy, PhD
Sarah O'Leary, MPH, MA
Stephanie Ramsey, MS
Jaya Rao, MD, MHS
Judy A. Stevens, PhD
Kristina Theis, MPH
Sherry Williams, MPH, CHES
Hatice Sahin Zahran, MD, MPH

An interactive version of *The State of Aging and Health in America 2007* report is available online at www.cdc.gov/aging.

Resources for Journalists

CDC has partnered with the American Society on Aging (ASA) to create background material for the media on several topics related to older adult health, ranging from West Nile Virus to epilepsy. These materials are available at <http://www.asaging.org/media/cdc.cfm>. Topics related to this report include the following:

- Cognitive Health
- Physical Activity
- Heart Disease
- Disability
- Immunizations
- Fall Prevention





Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as the sentinel for the health of people in the United States and throughout the world, strives to protect people's health and safety, provide reliable health information, and improve health through strong partnerships. CDC's mission is to promote health and quality of life by preventing and controlling disease, injury, and disability.



The Merck Company Foundation

2007 marks the 50th anniversary of The Merck Company Foundation, a U.S.-based, private charitable foundation. Established in 1957 by the global research-driven pharmaceutical company Merck & Co., Inc., the Foundation is funded entirely by the Company and is Merck's chief source of funding support to qualified non-profit, charitable organizations.

www.cdc.gov/aging
www.merck.com/cr