



The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities



Health, Wellness and Disability

Persons with disabilities have health care needs like everyone else

- To get and stay healthy, people with disabilities need appropriate health care just like everyone else.
- Persons with disability need health care professionals who really listen to, communicate with, and respect them.
- People with disabilities need health care professionals who treat all of their health needs, not just their disability.
- With accommodations and supports, ample access to health care, engagement in wellness activities, and the impetus that comes from supportive friends and families, persons with disabilities can, and do, lead long, productive, and healthy lives.

Persons with disabilities experience particular challenges to get the health care and wellness services they need.

- Persons with disabilities of all kinds share many of the same challenges as those without disabilities when it comes to their own health and well-being. Foremost among those challenges is having the tools and the knowledge – and the knowledgeable health care professionals – to help them enjoy and maintain full, healthy lives.
- A substantially lower percentage of persons with disabilities than those without disabilities report their health to be excellent or very good (28.4% versus 61.4%) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004). While at risk for the same ailments and conditions as people in the general population (for example, injury, obesity, hypertension and the common cold), persons with disabilities also are at specific risk for secondary conditions that can damage their health status and the quality of their lives.
- Challenges include,
 - Insufficient knowledge and awareness of disability by the public, health care, and wellness service providers, educators, administrators, the media and others.
 - Health care professionals and community attitudes and behaviors that lead people to see and respond only to the disability, not to the whole person.
 - Insufficient health care and wellness promotion services and information that is adapted for persons with disabilities.
 - Service systems that do not always make use of innovative and creative approaches to enhance the health and wellness of persons with disabilities.

