

# Healthy Aging



**F**or most older adults, good health ensures independence, security, and productivity as they age. Yet millions struggle every day with health and safety challenges such as chronic disease, falls, and behavioral health issues—all of which can severely impact quality of life.

## Chronic Disease

- Approximately 92% of older adults have at least one chronic disease, and 77% have at least two. Four chronic diseases—heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes—cause almost two-thirds of all deaths each year.
- Chronic diseases account for 75% of the money our nation spends on health care, yet only 1% of health dollars are spent on public efforts to improve overall health.
- Diabetes affects 12.2 million Americans aged 60+, or 23% of the older population. An additional 57 million Americans aged 20+ have pre-diabetes, which increases a person's risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. In a 2007 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention program for people at high risk for developing diabetes, lifestyle intervention reduced risk by 71% among those aged 60+.

- 90% of Americans aged 55+ are at risk for hypertension, or high blood pressure. Women are more likely than men to develop hypertension, with half of women aged 60+ and 77% of women aged 75+ having this condition. Hypertension affects 64% of men aged 75+.

## Falls

- Every 15 seconds, an older adult is treated in the emergency room for a fall; every 29 minutes, an older adult dies following a fall.
- Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of fractures, hospital admissions for trauma, and injury deaths. Falls are also the most common cause of older adult traumatic brain injuries, accounting for over 46% of fatal falls.
- The nation spends \$30 billion a year treating older adults for the effects of falls. If we cannot stem the rate of falls, it's projected that direct treatment costs will reach \$69.5 billion by 2020. A quarter of hip fracture patients will be in a nursing home for at least half a year, adding to Medicaid costs.

## Mental Health and Substance Abuse

- One in four older adults experiences some mental disorder such as depression, anxiety disorders, and dementia. This number is expected to double to 15 million by 2030.

# HEALTHY AGING FACT SHEET

- Depression affects seven million older Americans, and many do not receive treatment.
- The number of older adults with substance abuse problems is expected to double to five million by 2020.
- Two-thirds of older adults with mental health problems do not receive the treatment they need. Current preventative services for this population are extremely limited.
- Untreated substance abuse and mental health problems among older adults are associated with poor health outcomes, higher health care utilization, increased complexity of the course and prognosis of many illnesses, increased disability and impairment, compromised quality of life, increased caregiver stress, increased mortality, and higher risk of suicide.
- People aged 85+ have the highest suicide rate of any age group. Older white men have a suicide rate almost six times that of the general population.

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## About NCOA

The National Council on Aging is a nonprofit service and advocacy organization for older adults. We are a coalition of organizations that serve them. We work with government, business, and nonprofit organizations to stay healthy and secure, and we advocate for programs and policies to improve the lives of all seniors, especially the most vulnerable. For more information, please visit: [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org)

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## NCOA's Role

NCOA leads several collaborative efforts that are designed to empower older adults to live healthier lives.

### Center for Healthy Aging

NCOA's Center for Healthy Aging connects community organizations with evidence-based programs that help older adults learn how to manage chronic disease, improve their behavioral health, stay physically active, eat well, and more.

### Chronic Disease Self-Management Program

NCOA promotes Stanford University's Chronic Disease Self-Management Program through community workshops and an online program called Better Choices, Better Health®. The six-week CDSMP workshop has been proven to help older adults better manage their chronic conditions, improve their quality of life, and lower their health care costs.

### Falls Free® Initiative

NCOA leads a network of local, state, and national organizations dedicated to reducing the number of falls among older adults. The Initiative promotes evidence-based programs to prevent falls and sponsors an annual Falls Prevention Awareness Day each September on the first day of fall.

### Community Education

With the help of corporate sponsors, NCOA hosts community education programs that give older adults practical tools to manage conditions like diabetes, shingles, and hypertension.

### Self-Management Alliance

NCOA is leading the national Self-Management Alliance to promote strategic collaboration among government, business, and nonprofit organizations to achieve the goal of making self-management an integral part of health care in the United States by 2020.

For more information and complete citations, please visit [www.NCOA.org](http://www.NCOA.org).