

# About Us

Chronic diseases like cancer, heart disease, and diabetes are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States and the leading driver of the nation's \$4.5 trillion annual health care costs. CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP) supports healthy behaviors and preventive medical care to help people prevent and manage chronic diseases.



Most preventable chronic diseases are caused by key risk behaviors:

- [Tobacco use](#) and exposure to [secondhand smoke](#).
- [Poor nutrition](#), including diets low in fruits and vegetables and high in sodium and saturated fats.
- [Physical inactivity](#).
- [Excessive alcohol use](#).

These behaviors can lead to conditions such as [high blood pressure](#) or [obesity](#), which raise the risk of the most common and serious chronic diseases.

NCCDPHP commits more than 75% of its [budget](#) to fund state, local, territorial, and tribal partners working to prevent chronic diseases in their communities. This work focuses on following evidence-based prevention strategies and addressing the nonmedical conditions that affect people's health outcomes, called the [social determinants of health](#).

NCCDPHP surveys people across the United States to collect information like whether they smoke, what they eat, how they feel day-to-day, and what health conditions they have. These large, anonymous surveys help scientists at CDC and around the world understand things like:

- Which groups of people have the highest rates of chronic diseases.
- How health behaviors change over time.
- What factors—such as race, income, or geography—are linked to poor health.

We also use other sources of health information like birth and death certificates, registries of cancer cases and deaths, and electronic medical records. Names and other personal information have been removed from these sources.

Gathering and studying this information is called surveillance and epidemiology. We use surveillance and epidemiology to figure out what actions will work best to reduce chronic diseases, especially in the communities most affected.

- Tracking policies that affect chronic diseases, such as those related to smokefree air, access to healthy foods, and safe places to get physical activity.
- Surveying hospitals to find out what practices are used to prevent maternal deaths and support breastfeeding.
- Measuring how many Americans get preventive health care, such as routine cancer screening and dental cleanings.
- Measuring community factors that influence health, such as the number of liquor stores or tobacco retailers in an area.

A person's environment can determine whether they can exercise safely, buy healthy food, or drink clean water. That's why it's one of the key [social determinants of health](#) or nonmedical drivers of health. Actions that improve environments can reach a lot of people at once which saves money and protects lives.

- Passing smokefree air laws that cover all workplaces, restaurants, and bars to protect nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke.

- Designing communities to encourage walking and biking.
- Setting up farmers' markets that accept WIC vouchers in communities without access to affordable fruits and vegetables.

Routine preventive care—like blood pressure checks and cancer screenings—can help people catch problems early and stay well. We work with health systems to make this kind of care more effective and available in communities across the nation.

- Funding community health workers to help people manage their conditions and resolve problems that stand in the way of getting care, like language barriers or lack of transportation.
- Increasing the use of health information technology to flag patients who may have undiagnosed conditions or problems taking their medicine.
- Expanding the model of health care from a single doctor to a team approach, whereby other clinicians and pharmacists play an important role in helping patients keep their high blood pressure under control.

CDC's work to link medical care to community resources can help people prevent or slow down chronic diseases, avoid complications, and reduce the need for more health care. Improved links between community and clinical settings often mean that clinicians can refer patients to proven programs, ideally with community organizations and other non-clinicians getting reimbursed by health insurance.

- Increasing the use of proven community interventions—such as the National Diabetes Prevention Program—through clinician referrals and health insurance coverage.
- Working with faith-based and tribal organizations to educate women about cancer screening and connect them to care.
- Educating people to become more involved in their own health care, for example, by using home blood pressure monitoring.

These efforts have led to improvements in leading health indicators like high blood pressure control, physical activity, and teen pregnancy. Read more about [our impact on chronic diseases and risk behaviors](#).



#### [Director's Bio](#)

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Dr. Hacker leads the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

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