

About the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention

CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention (DHDSP) supports programs that help millions of Americans control their high blood pressure and reduce other risk factors for heart disease and stroke, the first and fifth leading causes of death in the United States.



Heart disease and stroke are responsible for 1 in 4 deaths in the United States each year. In addition, 120 million people have high blood pressure, a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke and an increasingly common cause of pregnancy complications. Cardiovascular disease costs the health care system \$251 billion every year and leads to \$156 billion in lost productivity.

In addition to high blood pressure, the leading preventable risk factors for heart disease and stroke are high LDL (bad) cholesterol, smoking, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, type 2 diabetes, and obesity.

DHDSP works to improve prevention and control of high blood pressure and high cholesterol, especially for groups affected by health disparities, which are differences in health across sex, geographic, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

DHDSP's newest area of focus is improving women's cardiovascular health by raising awareness of heart disease as women's number one health threat and improving control of high blood pressure, including during and following pregnancy.

In FY 2023, CDC awarded about \$114 million to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, 12 tribes, 23 tribal-serving organizations, 3 large cities or counties, 3 health systems, and 4 universities to:

- Increase the use of electronic health records and other technology to identify people who have heart disease and stroke risk factors and make sure they get the right treatment.
- Increase the use of team-based care, in which doctors and nurses work with pharmacists, community health workers, and others outside of medical settings to manage a patient's risk factors.
- Increase self-measurement of blood pressure for people with high blood pressure.
- Refer people to effective lifestyle programs that can help them learn to be physically active and eat nutritious foods.

CDC provides funding and guidance to 13 states to improve outcomes for people with and at risk for stroke through the [Paul Coverdell National Acute Stroke Program](#). This information is used to identify gaps in care and generate solutions to improve outcomes.

CDC then works with funded states to improve care at every stage—from the first symptoms through ambulance transport, hospitalization, post-stroke care, and discharge to home—and to increase awareness of the signs and symptoms of stroke.

The [WISEWOMAN](#) (Well-Integrated Screening and Evaluation for WOMen Across the Nation) program works to reduce heart disease and stroke risk factors for women aged 35 to 64 years with low incomes and little or no health insurance. The program aims to help women understand and reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease and benefit from early detection and treatment.

WISEWOMAN consists of 35 recipients in 32 states, 2 tribal organizations, and 1 US-Affiliated Pacific Island that offer preventive health services to women who participate in the [National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program](#).

The program's preventive services include blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes screenings. Women are counseled about their risk of heart disease and stroke and referred to lifestyle programs and other community resources that can help them control their blood pressure, eat a healthier diet, be physically active, and quit smoking.

[Million Hearts](#)® is a national initiative co-led by CDC and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, with a goal of preventing 1 million heart attacks and strokes within 5 years. It focuses on a small set of priorities selected for their ability to reduce heart disease, stroke, and related conditions:

- Reduce tobacco use, physical inactivity, and exposure to air pollution.
- Improve the ABCS of cardiovascular health (Aspirin or Anticoagulant use as appropriate, Blood pressure control, Cholesterol management, Smoking cessation).
- Increase the use of cardiac rehabilitation among people who have had a qualifying event like a heart attack or coronary artery bypass surgery.

Million Hearts® 2027 recognizes that heart disease and stroke are more common in populations that have a hard time being healthy because of conditions where they live, learn, work, and play. In response, it has developed specific policies, processes, and practices to address these [social determinants of health](#).

Read more: [Million Hearts Hypertension Control success stories](#).

- From 2018 to 2022, health systems partnering with funded states improved blood pressure control rates by 5%, even as the pandemic worsened cardiovascular health nationwide.
- The Coverdell Program has improved stroke care for over 1.1 million patients in over 800 hospitals. Patients receiving timely delivery of the life-saving drug tPA in Coverdell hospitals more than doubled, from 29% in 2008 to 71% in 2021.
- From 2008 to 2022, WISEWOMAN provided 365,440 screenings to 256,442 participants and provided nearly 502,000 healthy behavior support services to reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke.
- For more than 8 years, Million Hearts® and the National Association of Community Health Centers have trained more than 1,400 clinicians and developed more than 50 tools and resources. These efforts have helped more than 700,000 patients lower their risk for heart attack or stroke by improving the control of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.



[Director's Bio](#)

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Dr. Wright leads the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention.

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