

High Blood Pressure & Cholesterol: Out of Control in US

Every 39 seconds, an adult dies from a cardiovascular disease such as a heart attack or stroke. Cardiovascular disease claims the lives of more than 800,000 adults each year, 150,000 of whom are under the age of 65. Learn what you can do to reduce your risk.

For American Heart Month, the February edition of CDC Vital Signs focuses on cardiovascular disease and what we can do to increase control of high blood pressure and cholesterol -- reducing the number of heart attacks, strokes, and other cardiovascular diseases in the United States.

Highlights from the report:

- Cardiovascular diseases kill more than 800,000 adults in the US each year. Of these, 150,000 are younger than age 65.
- 68 million US adults have high blood pressure.
- 71 million US adults have high LDL cholesterol.
- Nearly 2 out of 3 adults with high LDL cholesterol and about half of adults with high blood pressure don't have their condition under control.
- Having health insurance is not sufficient to achieve the control
- Improvements in the way health care is delivered in the US are needed.

Common, Deadly and Preventable!

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the US. Two main reasons people have cardiovascular disease, such as heart disease or stroke, are high blood pressure and cholesterol, which are common, deadly and preventable. 68 million US adults have high blood pressure and 71 million US adults have high cholesterol. Far too few people have these conditions under control, even if they have health insurance. In fact, more than 80% of people who don't have their high blood pressure or cholesterol under control already have health insurance, indicating that for most patients, health insurance is not sufficient to achieve control. Clinical services that detect and help control high blood pressure or cholesterol are not being delivered to all those in need. Improvements in the way health care is delivered are needed in order to achieve greater levels of control.

What Can Be Done

This issue of CDC Vital Signs includes direct calls to action for:

- Policymakers at all levels to develop programs and policies that will increase effective prevention and chronic disease management strategies and champion policies to reduce salt and eliminate artificial trans-fats in the nation's food supply.
- Health care providers to work with their patients to manage these conditions at every opportunity. Further, these providers should use current guidelines and technology so patients get the follow up care they need and providers get feedback on their performance.
- Individuals to make healthy lifestyle choices, such as eating a healthy diet, daily physical activity, and not smoking. People also should follow their doctors' instructions and stay on their medications to control their blood pressure and cholesterol.