

Prevention Brief



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VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
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Healthy People 2010

Bottom Line

- Healthy People gives the nation, healthcare organizations, communities, and individuals a framework for actions to improve health.
- Healthy People uses Leading Health Indicators to provide a snapshot of the nation's health.
- The VHA can use the Healthy People framework for assuring a population-approach to reducing the preventable burden of disease.

Healthy People is a disease prevention and health promotion initiative led by the US Department of Health and Human Services. It represents a collaboration between federal, state and local governments as well as private, public, and non-profit foundations.

Healthy People 2010 builds on its predecessors, *Healthy People 2000* (published in 1990), *Promoting Health/Preventing Disease: Objectives for the Nation* (published in 1980), and *Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and*

Disease Prevention (published in 1979). Healthy People is a systematic plan to improve the health of individuals and communities over the upcoming decade. It provides a comprehensive picture of the nation's health, by identifying threats to our health, establishing goals, and measuring progress towards those goals.

The two overarching goals for Healthy People 2010 are to increase the quality and years of healthy life, and to eliminate

health disparities among different segments of the population.

Healthy People 2010 is organized into 28 focus areas containing a total of 467 health objectives. A smaller subset of these objectives has been identified and is summarized as the 10 Leading Health Indicators.

This Prevention Brief describes the Healthy People 2010 Leading Health Indicators and discusses their application within the Veterans Health Administration.

Leading Health Indicators

1. Physical Activity
2. Overweight and Obesity
3. Tobacco Use
4. Substance Abuse
5. Responsible Sexual Behavior
6. Mental Health
7. Injury and Violence
8. Environmental Quality
9. Immunization
10. Access to Health Care



The Healthy People 2010 Leading Health Indicators are the major determinants of health. Each has one or more objectives from Healthy People 2010 associated with it. These indicators provide a snap-shot of the nation's health and indicate where changes are needed to improve the health of our families, worksites and communities. They are in essence a report card for Healthy People 2010 and the nation.

Leading Health Indicators were chosen because they can inspire action to make positive health changes, data for measurement exists, and they are important public health issues. The indicators help us determine what we can do and where to

focus our efforts.

The first Leading Health Indicator is Physical Activity. One of the Healthy People physical activity objectives is to increase the proportion of adults who are regularly active for at least 30 minutes per day. Regular physical activity has multiple physical and psychological health benefits. These include preventing disease, increasing muscle and bone strength, decreasing body fat, helping to control weight, and improvement in psychological well-being and mood. Individuals, businesses and communities seeking to develop action plans that promote and increase physical activity will find the groundwork already begun because each

Leading Health Indicator has information related to the targeted populations, other issues affecting the indicator, and resources for action. The Leading Health Indicators are not mutually exclusive. For example, actions and changes that address physical activity also impact Overweight and Obesity, and Mental Health, and changes in Environmental Quality, another leading indicator, impact progress in Physical Activity. Each action and change will help to move individuals and communities forward in the health continuum and toward meeting the goals of Healthy People 2010: to increase the quality and years of healthy life and to eliminate health disparities among different segments of the population.

Healthy People in the VHA

Healthy People Overarching Goals

- Increase quality and years of healthy life.

Years of healthy life is defined as the estimated average amount of time spent in optimal health. Quality of life reflects a general sense of happiness and satisfaction with our own lives and environment.

- Eliminate health disparities

Health disparities are defined as health differences based on age, gender, ethnicity, income, education, geographic location, disability and sexual orientation.

The VHA can use the Healthy People 2010 framework for guiding many of its actions and already does. Some Leading Health Indicators may be more applicable than others for the VHA; but all can be impacted to some extent. Examples of how the Leading Health Indicators apply within the VHA follow.

The HealthierUS Veterans (HUSV) initiative, a joint collaboration between the Departments of Health and Human Services and Veterans Affairs, is an example of a program to impact two of the Leading Health Indicators- Physical Activity and Overweight and Obesity. Its aim is to educate veterans, their families and their communities about the health risks of physical inactivity and overweight/obesity and inspire individuals to make health behavior changes. HUSV

activities have included the *Get Fit for Life* Exercise DVD, promotion of fitness challenges and a 100-day Champions' Challenge. More than 80 HUSV-related events have been hosted by local VAMCs, which often include partnerships with local organizations. Employee Health and Fitness Day and the HealthierFeds Challenge supports, promotes and encourages physical activity.

The *MOVE!* Weight Management Program for Veterans, an evidence-based clinical weight management program with a comprehensive focus on behavior, nutrition, and physical activity, is another VHA program well-aligned with Healthy People Leading Health Indicators. *MOVE!* is now in every VHA medical center and in many community-based outpatient clinics.

VHA has a long history of

counseling and treating veterans for tobacco use cessation. Tobacco use policy is coordinated centrally and performance indicators related to tobacco use are part of the VA Performance Measurement System. To improve access to therapies for cessation, the approach changed from that of specialty care to a population health approach.

Each year VHA vaccinates veterans against influenza, pneumococcal and other vaccine preventable diseases. This past year VHA made available to veterans two new vaccines, Human Papilloma Virus and Herpes Zoster.

This is a snapshot of VHA's efforts to improve the health of veterans and employees. VHA's future efforts in these areas can be guided by Healthy People 2010 and its successor, Healthy People 2020, soon to be released.

Additional Resources

Healthy People Resources

Healthy People home page:
<http://www.healthypeople.gov/>

The Leading Health Indicators established by Healthy People 2010 will be used to measure the health of the Nation from 2000 – 2010:
<http://www.healthypeople.gov/LHI/>

The 2005 assessment of the status of the Healthy People 2010 objectives, identifying significant trends, gaps and movement toward or away from targets:
<http://www.healthypeople.gov/data/midcourse/default.htm#pubs>

The Healthy People 2010 database is located at the National Center for Health Statistics:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/hphome.htm>

Information about the development of Healthy People 2020:
<http://www.healthypeople.gov/hp2020/>

Other Resources

Healthfinder.gov is the U.S. government gateway to reliable health information resources that have been carefully selected by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
<http://www.healthypeople.gov/healthfinder/>

