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alzheimer public health news

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Alzheimer's and dementia included for first time in *Healthy People*

For the first time since its inception in 1979, the federal government's decennial Healthy People report includes national health goals and objectives related to Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. With more than 5 million Americans living with Alzheimer's today and as many as 16 million individuals who could be affected by 2050, inclusion in [Healthy People 2020](#) underscores the recognition of the growing public health threat that Alzheimer's and dementia pose to the nation.



Two specific objectives are included in the topic area on Alzheimer's and other dementias:

1. Increase the proportion of persons with diagnosed Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, or their caregiver, who are *aware* of the diagnosis. Awareness that Alzheimer's or dementia is present is central to ensuring individuals and their families have knowledge of available treatments, care and support services as well as greater opportunities to make future care, financial and legal plans. Yet today, fewer than half of those with Alzheimer's have a diagnosis in their medical records.
2. Reduce the proportion of preventable hospitalizations in persons with diagnosed Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. People with Alzheimer's and other dementia typically have higher hospital admissions, longer stays, and higher hospital readmission

Sixth Leading Cause of Death

Alzheimer's disease is the [sixth leading cause of death](#) in America.

And the number of Americans who die from the devastating disease is rising. See how the dramatic increase in Alzheimer deaths stacks up against other major diseases [here](#).

A Public Health Agenda

In 2010, the Alzheimer's Association released [Combating Alzheimer's Disease: A Public Health Agenda](#), which spells out specific policies that can be adopted to combat this growing public health crisis.



Contact

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rates - and therefore incur higher costs. Making significant inroads on this objective has the great potential of reducing health care costs associated with Alzheimer's disease - not an insignificant issue especially for Medicaid.

Alzheimer state plans include focus on public health



Sixteen states now have published state Alzheimer plans, and many include recommendations regarding public health aspects of fighting the disease. Foremost among those are increased surveillance, early detection, and education about the links between

risk factors for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias and for other major chronic illnesses. The [Texas state plan](#), in particular, has a strong public health component.

Healthy Brain Initiative to continue through 2015
The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has renewed its Cooperative Agreement with the Alzheimer's Association to continue and extend the work of the Healthy Brain Initiative - a project begun in 2005 - for another five years. Over the past five years, the CDC and the Association have written a [Road Map](#) for maintaining cognitive health, helped to develop a Cognitive Impairment Module for the state Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey, assisted states in using that Module, and developed an Alzheimer's disease [public health agenda](#).

With the project run by the [CDC's Healthy Aging Program](#) and the Association's Public Policy Division, it is well positioned to develop activities related to the burden of cognitive impairment, translate those activities into possible public policy actions to fight the growing Alzheimer crisis, and educate the American people about population risk reduction as the science and research warrant.