



MEDICARE PREVENTIVE SERVICES POLICY RESOURCE CENTER

PREVENTING HEART DISEASE LEGISLATOR POLICY BRIEF

TALKING POINTS

- Cardiovascular disease (CVD) or “heart disease” is a broad category of diseases that affect the heart and circulatory system. The most common types of heart disease include coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension (high blood pressure) and heart failure.
- Risk factors associated with heart disease include diabetes, high cholesterol and triglyceride levels, high blood pressure, overweight and obesity, physical inactivity, and tobacco use.
- Every year, heart disease kills more Americans (both men and women) than any other disease; on average, one American dies every 37 seconds from heart disease.
- An estimated 80 million American adults (one in three) have one or more types of heart disease.
- Approximately 455,000 women died from heart disease in 2005 - *one woman every minute*.
- African-Americans are more likely than whites to have high blood pressure, have twice the risk of first-ever stroke, and 1.5 times the risk of dying from heart disease .
- Heart disease is preventable, and may even be reversible, with certain lifestyle changes and physician supervision.

ACTIONS FOR LEGISLATORS

- Educate constituents about the risk factors associated with heart disease; the benefits of establishing good relationships with their physicians; and the importance of early screening and treatment.
- Emphasize prevention and health promotion as core values in the state government by implementing policies and programs that benefit all sub-populations.
- Reduce health disparities by increasing the availability of screenings and treatments to low-income and minority communities through clinics and public health departments.
- Promote the utilization of Medicare’s preventive services including cholesterol and triglyceride levels screenings, diabetes screening and supplies, and the one-time physical exam.
- Create or support health initiatives to promote lifestyle modifications: cigarette smoking cessation, 30 minutes a day of physical activity, heart-healthy diets, weight maintenance and reduction, and evaluation and treatment of depression.
- Form comprehensive and innovative collaborations involving public, private, and nonprofit sectors in order to effectively and efficiently combat heart disease.
- Encourage education and prevention early in life through the schools and community organizations.
- Support data collection and monitoring of the prevalence, risk factors and behaviors of the population to help identify solutions and their impacts.

SOURCES

American Heart Association. Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics – 2009 Update.
CDC. Moving into Action: Promoting Heart-Healthy and Stroke-Free Communities.