



SAFEGUARDING HEALTH

Peace and security depend on the health of all people. Disease in one corner of the world threatens people in all corners of the world. Safeguarding health is fundamental to working for the common good. By promoting wellness, preventing illness and harm, and treating injury and disease, communities protect their most valuable asset: human life.

Good health is perhaps the most valued quality of life. In the past century, human health has improved dramatically. Life expectancy in the United States has soared—from age 42 in 1900 to age 75 in 2000. The development of antibiotics, vaccines for common infectious diseases, and surgical remedies have extended and improved countless lives.

During the same era, new threats to human health have emerged. Highly resistant strains of bacteria evolve as fast as new antibiotics are developed. Chronic immune deficiencies compromise the quality and length of life. Pervasive environmental hazards and commercial farming practices pose new risks to millions of people. Persistent poverty and hunger prevail in many parts of the world. In the United States, inconsistent access to healthcare results in disturbing disparities between rich and poor.

Basic health protection, prevention and treatment are essential to human life and dignity. Providing help to one benefits all.

Michigan

community foundationsSM

For **good.** For **ever.**SM

“The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.”

World Health Organization
 Constitution

FAST FACTS ON HEALTH

Immunizations Nearly 81 percent of American babies get all recommended vaccinations before age 3, exceeding the national goal of 80 percent. Several life-threatening diseases, including measles, rubella and polio, no longer occur naturally in the United States. As long as vaccine-preventable diseases circulate in the world, however, a decline in immunization could leave American children vulnerable to infection.¹

Physical activity About one-fourth (26 percent) of adults engage in vigorous physical activity three or more times per week, while 59 percent do not exercise at all.²

Overweight and obesity Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of American adults over age 19 are overweight. Nearly half are obese. About 15 percent of children and youth ages 6 to 19 are overweight.³ Overweight adolescents show an alarming increase in the incidence of Type 2 diabetes, and have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight or obese adults.⁴

Tobacco Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable deaths in the United States, accounting for about one in five deaths each year. An estimated 22.5 percent of all adults in the United States smoke cigarettes.⁵

Environmental quality Nearly 1.7 million children ages one to five have enough lead in their blood to harm their cognitive development. Lead poisoning is preventable.⁶

Access to healthcare In 2002, 15.2 percent of Americans were uninsured. Statistically, they are more likely to experience poor health and die early, with related costs totaling \$65 to \$130 billion annually. The uninsured are diagnosed at later disease stages, get less therapeutic care, are sicker when hospitalized and more likely to die during their stay.⁷ The United States ranked 28th in the world in infant mortality in 1998. African Americans experience 14.1 deaths for every 1,000 live births, more than twice the national average (6.9 per 1,000).⁸ More than one-third of children in poverty without health insurance have unmet medical needs.⁹

Substance abuse In 2003, almost 8.6 million (34.3 percent) youths aged 12 to 17 had used alcohol in the past year.¹⁰ About 38 percent of young adults aged 18 to 22 used illicit drugs in the past year.¹¹

Responsible sexual behavior In 2001, 85 percent of U.S. adolescents in grades 9-12 abstained from sexual activity or used condoms.¹² Healthy People 2010 target is 95 percent.

Mental health Approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population is affected by mental illness during a given year; no one is immune. Of all mental illnesses, depression is the most common disorder. More than 19 million adults in the United States suffer from depression. Major depression is the leading cause of disability and is the cause of more than two-thirds of suicides each year. In 1997, only 23 percent of adults diagnosed with depression received treatment.¹³

Injury and violence In 1995, the cost of injury and violence in the United States was estimated at more than \$224 billion per year. These costs include direct medical care and rehabilitation as well as productivity losses to the nation's workforce. The total societal cost of motor vehicle crashes alone exceeds \$150 billion annually. In 1997, 32,436 individuals died from firearm injuries; of this number, 42 percent were victims of homicide. In 1997, homicide was the third leading cause of death for children aged 5 to 14 years, an increasing trend in childhood violent deaths.¹⁴

In every community, people come together to help those affected by abuse, violence, illness and injury. Private philanthropy supports programs to improve the lives of others by promoting wellness, providing testing, finding cures for disease, and building clinics for those in need.

¹Anita Manning. "Immunization rate exceeds federal goals." USA Today, July 26, 2005. ²Summary Health Statistics for U.S. Adults: National Health Interview Survey, 2003, table 29. ³National Center for Health Statistics. Overweight Prevalence 1999-2002. ⁴Torgan, Carol, Ph.D. NIH: Word on Health, "Child Obesity on the Rise," June 2005. ⁵National Center For Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; Adult Cigarette Smoking in the United States: Current Estimates Fact Sheet, May 2004. ⁶Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1990-1994. ⁷U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Healthcare Disparities Report, 2004. ⁸National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), 2000. ⁹Cohen RA, Bloom B. Trends in health insurance and access to medical care for children under age 19 years: United States, 1998-2003. Advance data from vital and health statistics; no. 355. National Center of Health Statistics, 2005. ¹⁰U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Closing the Health Gap": Reducing Health Disparities Affecting African-Americans. ¹¹U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, <http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k5/College/college.cfm>. ¹²Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1997. ¹³www.healthypeople.gov/Document/HTML/uih/uih_4.htm. ¹⁴ibid.