

Good health adds life to years

WORLD HEALTH DAY
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Seniors & disabilities

The aging of the world's population is having a major impact on disability trends. Advancing age increases the risk of acquiring a disability. In the Americas as in the rest of the world, the prevalence of disability is increasing as a result of aging as well the rise of chronic health conditions, trends that are expected to continue and even intensify in the next decades.

Preventing health conditions that produce disabilities is both a development and a health issue and requires actions targeting both individuals and the population at large. Attention to environmental factors such as water and sanitation, workplace and road safety, as well as nutrition and disease prevention are important for reducing the incidence of health conditions that can lead to disabilities. Improving early detection of health problems and reducing the severity of diseases or injuries that are already established can help reduce related complications.

Key facts:

- Fifteen percent of the world's population (more than 1 billion people) live with some form of disability, and 2 percent of them—nearly 200 million—have significant difficulty functioning.
- The risk of disability increases with age, reflecting an accumulation of health risks across a lifespan of disease, injury, and chronic illness.
- The prevalence of disability among people 45 years and older is higher in low-income countries than in high-income ones and is higher among women than men.
- The aging process can affect people with disabilities earlier. For example, some people with developmental disabilities show signs of premature aging in their 40s and 50s. Moreover, age-related changes can have a greater impact on people with disabilities.

Links:

World Report on Disability (WHO & The World Bank, 2011)
http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report/en/index.html#