



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *Staying Ahead of Father Time*

*Prevalence and Most Common Causes of Disability Among Adults — United States, 2005*

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*[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.*

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Many of us take our health for granted, but a recent CDC study found that more than one in five U.S. adults had some type of disability.

Dr. Jennifer Hootman is an epidemiologist with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the impact of disabilities on U.S. adults. Welcome to the show, Jennifer.

[Dr. Hootman] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Jennifer, first of all, how do you define disability?

[Dr. Hootman] Disability was defined as meeting one of four criteria. The first one was having to use an assistive aid of some type, like a cane or a crutch. The second was having trouble doing activities of daily living, like climbing a flight of stairs. The third one was they were unable to work, at a job or business or around the house. And the fourth one was if they had a specific condition, like Alzheimer's disease.

[Dr. Gaynes] What groups in the U.S. population are most affected by disabilities?

[Dr. Hootman] There are two groups that are most affected. Women have a higher rate of disability, at all ages, compared to men. And the second group are baby boomers. There are approximately as many baby boomers affected now as older adults who are age 65 and older and as the baby boomers age, these numbers are expected to increase.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the most common disabilities?

[Dr. Hootman] The three most common disabilities are simple activities of daily living, such as difficulty walking three city blocks, difficulty climbing a flight of stairs, or difficulty carrying or lifting 10 pounds.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the most common causes of disabilities?

[Dr. Hootman] The top three common causes of disability are arthritis or rheumatism, back or spine problems, and heart trouble.

[Dr. Gaynes] Jennifer, what kind of economic impact do disabilities have on the United States?

[Dr. Hootman] Disabilities cost approximately three hundred billion dollars each year and that number includes both the cost of medical care, as well as lost productivity.

[Dr. Gaynes] Jennifer, what suggestions can you offer to avoid or delay the onset of these disabilities?

[Dr. Hootman] Well, the risk factors that are commonly responsible for most chronic illnesses are also risk factors for disability. So people should stop smoking if they smoke, maintain or lose weight if they need to, increase their physical activity, and learn how to manage their chronic illnesses, such as hypertension or diabetes.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about disabilities among adults?

[Dr. Hootman] They can go to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and on the A-Z list they can choose 'Disabilities.'

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks Jennifer. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Jennifer Hootman about the impact of disabilities on U.S. adults.

Remember, disabilities affect one in five U.S. adults and the numbers are going up as the population ages. Exercise, a healthy diet, and quitting smoking can delay or even prevent the onset of some disabilities and improve the management of others.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

*[Announcer]* For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.