Women experience health differently than men. Several health conditions are unique to women, while others affect women more severely than men. This fact sheet includes information on heart disease, cancer, and mental health. These topics were chosen because of their particular burden on women. For example, heart disease is the leading cause of death for women and men in the United States, and women are more likely to die following a heart attack than men. The most common cancers among women are breast, lung, and colorectal cancer. The leading cause of cancer death for women is lung cancer. Depression is the most common women’s mental health problem and more women than men are diagnosed with depression each year.

This brochure is designed to help public health program planners, community advocates, educators, and policymakers find proven intervention strategies—including programs, services and policies—to develop successful interventions and campaigns that address women’s health. It can help decision makers in public and private sectors make choices about what intervention strategies are best for their communities. This brochure summarizes information in The Guide to Community Preventive Services (The Community Guide), an essential resource for people who want to know what works in public health.

Use the information in this brochure to help select from intervention strategies you can adapt for your community to:

- Prevent cardiovascular disease.
- Increase cancer screening rates.
- Improve mental health.

The Community Guide provides evidence-based findings from the Community Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) about community preventive programs, services, and policies to improve health. Learn more about The Community Guide and what works to improve women’s health by visiting [www.thecommunityguide.org/](http://www.thecommunityguide.org/).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides administrative, research, and technical support for the Community Preventive Services Task Force.
**THE PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGE**

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in the United States, killing 292,188 women in 2009—that’s 1 in every 4 female deaths.⁶

- Although heart disease is sometimes thought of as a “man’s disease,” about the same number of women and men die each year in the U.S. Despite increases in awareness over the past decade, only 54% of women recognize that heart disease is their number 1 killer.⁷

- Heart disease is the leading cause of death for African American and white women in the United States. Among Hispanic women, heart disease and cancer cause roughly the same number of deaths each year. For American Indian or Alaska Native and Asian or Pacific Islander women, heart disease is second only to cancer.⁸

Every year, cancer claims the lives of more than a quarter of a million women in America.

- Each year, about 220,000 cases of breast cancer are diagnosed and about 40,000 women die from it.
- About 65,000 women were diagnosed with colorectal cancer in 2013 and about 24,500 died from it.⁹
- Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among women. In 2013, there were about 100,677 cases of lung cancer in women and about 70,518 deaths among women.⁹

For more information about cancer and women, see: [http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/)

Depression rates are higher among women and non-Hispanic blacks than other groups.¹¹

- In 2009-2012, women had higher rates of depression than men in every age group.
- The highest rate of depression, 12.3% was found in women aged 40-59.
- In 2006, 10.5% of women reported current depression compared to 6.8% of men. Eleven percent of non-Hispanic Blacks reported current depression compared to 8% of non-Hispanic Whites, and 9.9% of Hispanics.

For more findings from the CDC Health Disparities and Inequalities Report (CHDIR), see: [http://www.cdc.gov/minorityhealth/CHDIRReport.html](http://www.cdc.gov/minorityhealth/CHDIRReport.html)
The Community Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) has released the following findings on what works in public health that can be used to improve women’s health. These findings are compiled in The Guide to Community Preventive Services (The Community Guide) and listed in the table below. Use the findings to identify intervention strategies you could use for your community.

For more information on related interventions for specific public health topics, see www.thecommunityguide.org/task-force-findings/.

Legend for Task Force Findings:  
- **Recommended** (green diamond) 
- **Insufficient Evidence** (yellow diamond) 
- **Recommended Against** (red triangle) 

Visit the Cardiovascular Disease, Cancer, and Mental Health topic pages of The Community Guide website at www.thecommunityguide.org/ to find summaries of Task Force findings relevant to improving women’s health. Click on each topic area to find results from the systematic reviews, included studies, evidence gaps, and journal publications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Task Force Finding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Measured Blood Pressure Monitoring Interventions for Improved Blood Pressure Control</td>
<td>Support and promote use of personal blood pressure measurement devices in managing and treating high blood pressure.</td>
<td>![Green Diamond]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions Engaging Community Health Workers</td>
<td>Improve blood pressure and cholesterol and increase self-reported health behaviors in patients at increased CVD risk.</td>
<td>![Green Diamond]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Decision-Support Systems</td>
<td>Computer-based information systems designed to assist providers in implementing clinical guidelines at point of care.</td>
<td>![Green Diamond]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing Out-of-Pocket Costs for CVD Preventive Services for Patients with High Blood Pressure and High Cholesterol</td>
<td>Program and policy changes that make cardiovascular disease preventive services more affordable.</td>
<td>![Green Diamond]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team-Based Care to Improve Blood Pressure Control</td>
<td>Health systems-level organizational intervention with a multidisciplinary team to improve the quality of hypertension care.</td>
<td>![Green Diamond]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cancer</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Reminders</td>
<td>Letters, postcards, emails, or phone messages telling clients they are due for screening.</td>
<td>![Green Diamond]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Media</td>
<td>Short videos, letters, brochures, and newsletters used to inform and motivate women to be screened for cancer.</td>
<td>![Green Diamond]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-on-One Education</td>
<td>Information delivered individually to inform and motivate women to be screened.</td>
<td>![Green Diamond]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provider Assessment and Feedback</td>
<td>Evaluates provider performance in offering and delivering screening to clients and tells providers about their performance.</td>
<td>![Green Diamond]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provider Reminder and Recall Systems</td>
<td>Inform providers it is time for a client’s cancer screening test (reminder) or that the client is overdue for screening (recall).</td>
<td>![Green Diamond]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental Health</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Care for the Management of Depressive Disorders</td>
<td>Multicomponent, healthcare system-level interventions using case managers to link primary care providers, patients, and mental health specialists.</td>
<td>![Green Diamond]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Benefits Legislation</td>
<td>Regulation changes for mental health insurance coverage to decrease financial burden and increase access to and use of mental health services including substance abuse services.</td>
<td>![Green Diamond]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UNDERSTANDING THE FINDINGS

The Task Force bases its findings on systematic reviews of the scientific literature. With oversight from the Task Force, scientists and subject matter experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conduct these reviews in collaboration with a wide range of government, academic, policy, and practice-based partners. Based on the strength of the evidence, the Task Force assigns each intervention strategy to one of the categories below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Icon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommended</td>
<td>There is strong or sufficient evidence that the intervention strategy is <strong>effective</strong>. This finding is based on the number of studies, how well the studies were designed and carried out, and the consistency and strength of the results.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient Evidence</td>
<td>There is <strong>not enough evidence</strong> to determine whether the intervention strategy is effective. This does not mean the intervention does not work. There is not enough research available or the results are too inconsistent to make a firm conclusion about the intervention strategy's effectiveness. The Task Force encourages those who use interventions with insufficient evidence to evaluate their efforts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Against</td>
<td>There is strong or sufficient evidence that the intervention strategy is <strong>harmful or not effective</strong>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visit the “Systematic Review Methods” page on The Community Guide website at [www.thecommunityguide.org/about/our-methodology/](http://www.thecommunityguide.org/about/our-methodology/) for more information about the methods used to conduct the systematic reviews and the criteria the Task Force uses to make findings and recommendations.

RESOURCES

You can use the following resources to guide the implementation of evidence-based strategies and put the Task Force findings to work.

- **CDC Vital Signs: Cancer Screening**

- **Division of Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention, CDC**
  [www.cdc.gov/dhdsp](http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp)

- **National Institute of Mental Health**

- **Healthy People 2020**
  [www.healthypeople.gov/](http://www.healthypeople.gov/)

*The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides administrative, research, and technical support for the Community Preventive Services Task Force.*
EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE

- The Task Force findings for intervention strategies related to improving women’s health are based on systematic reviews of the available evidence.
- Systematic reviews look at the results of research and evaluation studies published in peer-reviewed journals and other sources.
- Each systematic review looks at the effectiveness of each intervention strategy and how it works in different populations and settings. If found effective, cost and return on investment are also reviewed when available.
- For each intervention strategy, a summary of the systematic review, evidence gaps, and journal publications can be found on the intervention page for that topic section of the website at www.thecommunityguide.org/.

SUMMARIZING FINDINGS FOR IMPROVING WOMEN’S HEALTH

All Task Force findings on cardiovascular disease, cancer, and mental health are available online at www.thecommunityguide.org/. Some of the Task Force recommendations related to these three topics are below.

- CVD: Self-measured blood pressure monitoring
- Mental Health: Collaborative Care for the management of Depressive Disorders
- Cancer: Provider-oriented strategies

PUTTING THE TASK FORCE FINDINGS TO WORK

As a public health decision maker, practitioner, community leader, or someone who can influence the health of your community, you can use The Community Guide to create a blueprint for success.

- Identify your community’s needs. Review the intervention strategies recommended by the Task Force and determine which ones best match your needs. Adopt, adapt, or develop evidence-based interventions to support your programs, services, and policies.
- Explore Cancer Control P.L.A.N.E.T.’s Research-tested Intervention Programs (RTIP) for community-based and clinical programs that were evaluated, found effective, and published in a peer-reviewed journal by visiting https://ccplanet.cancer.gov/
- Visit the Department of Health and Human Services Million Hearts® initiative at http://millionhearts.hhs.gov to identify ways to reduce CVD risk across the U.S.
- Search CDC’s Mental Health website at www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/ to understand basic mental health terminology and get connected with other resources related to the topic.
South Carolinians Promote Screening for African American Women

African American women in South Carolina die at higher rates than other women from breast and cervical cancers. Following recommendations from the Task Force, the St. James-Santee Family Health Center created a program that encourages women to get their much-needed screening. They used approaches such as client reminders and incentives, one-on-one education, and provider reminders. Within 2 years, the program—called Black Corals—netted a 17 percent increase in Pap tests and a 15 percent increase in mammograms. Missed appointments dropped from 31 to 19 percent.

Read more on these and other success stories in The Community Guide in Action series at www.thecommunityguide.org/stories/.

REFERENCES


