

# Overcoming Barriers To Better Health Can Make Seniors Part Of The Solution To Our Nation's Spiraling Health Care Costs

(NAPSA)—An astounding 87 percent of Americans 65 and older have at least one chronic condition, and 67 percent have multiple chronic conditions, according to a 2004 report prepared by Partnership for Solutions. Baby boomers are aging into Medicare at a clip of 10,000 per day, which means that the number of Medicare beneficiaries with chronic diseases is set to skyrocket, putting an unprecedented strain on our health care system.

These startling statistics mean that, more than ever, seniors need to understand the connection between the sustainability of our health care system and their lifestyle choices.

“The U.S. spends more on the health of a 65-year-old than any other country in the world. Almost one-third of total health care expenditures in 2008, the last year for which we have data, were spent on care and treatment of the elderly,” said Reed V. Tuckson, M.D., executive vice president and chief of medical affairs, United-Health Group, which serves more than 9 million members through its portfolio of Medicare plans. “Because the health of our seniors is important and we all have a stake in escalating health care costs, it’s essential that we work together to support each other in making healthy lifestyle choices.”

To help older adults feel empowered about their health, Dr. Tuckson authored “The Doctor in the Mirror,” which is based on the premise that much of our wellness is in our own hands. Dr. Tuckson says seniors can break down barriers to better health by making small lifestyle changes that can result in significant improvements:

•**Take a permanent vacation from smoking.** It’s never



**Small lifestyle changes can make a big difference in a senior's health.**

too late to quit—and people often see immediate health benefits once they do.

•**Watch your weight.** Start by calculating your body mass index (BMI). With your BMI in mind, develop a plan to help you lose weight or maintain a healthy weight.

•**Have your blood pressure checked regularly.** This “silent killer” usually has no outward symptoms but can increase the likelihood of cardiovascular disease–related death.

•**Get active.** Start with simple goals, such as elevating your heart rate 15 to 30 minutes per day. Then incorporate stretching, balance and strength exercises into your routine.

•**Adopt a healthier diet.** Choose foods that are low in cholesterol and sodium, including lean meats, fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy and whole grains that contain plenty of fiber.

For more tips, strategies and resources designed to help older adults age with vitality, find “The Doctor in the Mirror” on Amazon.com or visit [www.DoctorInTheMirror.com](http://www.DoctorInTheMirror.com).