

Chronic Diseases

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

DAVID J. SENCER
CDC MUSEUM
History • Legacy • Innovation

Read these cards to learn more about chronic diseases of public health importance.

Chronic diseases are defined broadly as conditions that last 1 year or more and require ongoing medical attention or limit activities of daily living or both.

How to play: These cards are multifaceted. You can match the cards of the same pathogen to play a game of memory, use them as flashcards to study, or just collect them.

Many chronic diseases are caused by a short list of risk behaviors and/or genetics:



Tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke



Poor nutrition, including diets low in fruits and vegetables and high in sodium and saturated fats



Physical inactivity

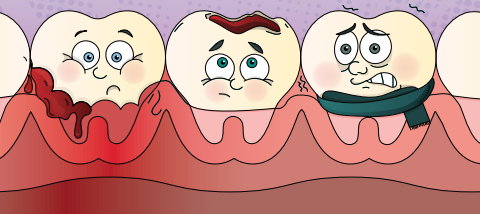


Excessive alcohol use



Genetics

Gum Disease (Periodontal)



Risk Factors:

Diabetes, genetics, smoking and tobacco use, and poor oral hygiene all increase a person's risk for gum disease. Medications with oral side effects, underlying medical conditions, stress, crooked teeth, hormonal changes from pregnancy or menopause, and poor nutrition may also be associated with gum disease.

Symptoms:

Symptoms can include red, swollen, tender or bleeding gums, painful chewing, loose or sensitive teeth, or gums that have pulled away from the teeth.

Gum Disease (Periodontal)



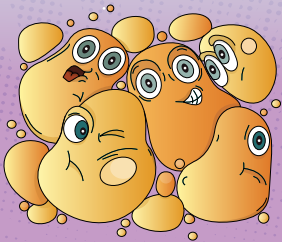
Prevention:

Brush your teeth twice a day and floss every day to remove the bacteria that causes gum disease. See a dentist at least once a year. Don't smoke or use any tobacco products.

Treatment:

Treatment may include deep cleaning of the tooth root surfaces below the gums, medications taken by mouth or placed directly under the gums, and sometimes surgery.

Obesity



Risk Factors:

Many factors can contribute to excess weight gain including genetics, eating patterns, stress, physical activity levels, screen time, and sleep routines. Social determinants of health (the conditions in which we live, learn, work, and play) and certain medications also play a role.

Symptoms:

If an individual's weight is above a healthy range, then other conditions like high blood pressure, heart diseases, type 2 diabetes, and joint problems may occur.

Obesity



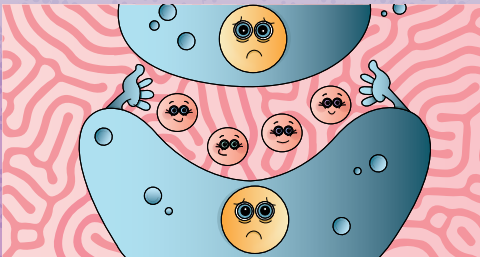
Prevention:

Managing stress, improving sleep, limiting screen time, eating healthy foods, and increasing physical activity can help prevent obesity.

Treatment:

Treatments may include lifestyle changes, such as eating a healthier diet, increasing physical activity, improving sleep, and managing stress. Medication and participation in community or a clinical treatment program may also be used in combination with lifestyle changes.

Depression



Risk Factors:

Family history of depression, genetics, traumatic or stressful major life changes, chronic disease and health conditions, environment, stress, certain medications, and alcohol or drug use are all risk factors.

Symptoms:

Feeling sad, worthless or hopeless, not wanting to do fun activities, and feeling irritable, easily frustrated, or restless are all symptoms. Waking up too early or sleeping too much, changes in appetite, or thinking about suicide or hurting yourself are also symptoms.

Depression



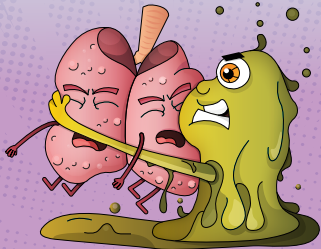
Prevention:

Some ways to maintain good mental health and well-being include staying physically active, getting enough sleep, eating healthy and avoiding alcohol, smoking, and drug use. Connect and talk with others you trust.

Treatment:

Therapy or counseling can help people with depression. Taking prescribed antidepressants also can help improve mood. If you or someone you know is in crisis or needs immediate support, call or text 988 or [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org).

COPD



Risk Factors:

COPD is a group of lung diseases that get worse overtime. Smoking is by far the greatest risk factor. Exposure to secondhand smoke, air pollution, family history, and asthma increase the likelihood of developing COPD.

Symptoms:

Symptoms of COPD include frequent coughing or wheezing, excess phlegm, mucus, shortness of breath, and trouble taking a deep breath.

COPD



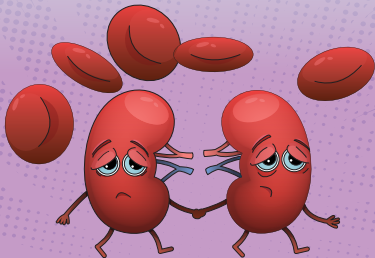
Prevention:

Don't smoke, avoid exposure to secondhand smoke, and limit time in places with bad air quality. Early detection of COPD may change its course and progress.

Treatment:

There is no cure for COPD. Lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking and pulmonary rehab and treatments, such as medication, vaccinations, oxygen therapy, can help reduce symptoms and improve quality of life.

Chronic Kidney Disease



Risk Factors:

Diabetes, age, high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and family history of CKD are primary risk factors.

Symptoms:

CKD is a condition where the kidneys are damaged and cannot filter blood well, so excess fluid and waste from blood remain in the body. This may cause other health problems, such as heart disease and stroke. Early CKD has no symptoms, but it can be detected by measuring protein in the urine.

Chronic Kidney Disease



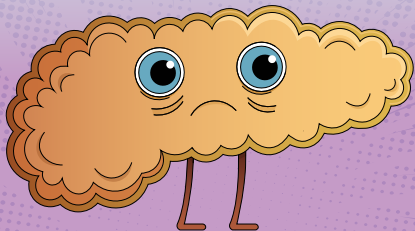
Prevention:

To help control blood pressure and blood sugar, which can impact CKD, maintain regular physical activity and a healthy weight, quit smoking, and avoid exposure to secondhand smoke.

Treatment:

Once diagnosed, talk with your doctor regarding the best treatment plan. If left untreated, CKD can progress to kidney failure. If the kidneys stop working, dialysis or a kidney transplant may be needed.

Type 1 Diabetes



Risk Factors:

Type 2 diabetes is when the body can't use insulin properly. Risk factors include being overweight, having a family history, being physically inactive, and being 45 or older.

Symptoms:

Type 2 diabetes symptoms often develop over several years and can go on a long time without being noticed. Symptoms may include peeing a lot, feeling very thirsty, blurry vision, tingling in the hands or feet, and sores that heal slowly.

Type 1 Diabetes



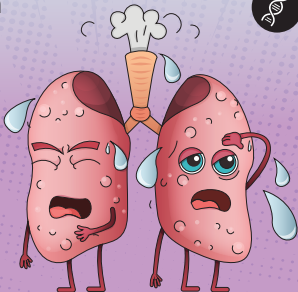
Prevention:

Proven lifestyle changes can prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. These include losing weight, eating a healthy diet, and getting regular physical activity.

Treatment:

Type 2 diabetes may be managed with healthy eating and physical activity. Regularly testing blood sugar can help keep you within your target range. Insulin medications may be prescribed or other diabetes medicines to help manage blood sugar and avoid complications.

Asthma



Risk Factors:

If someone in your immediate family has asthma, you are more likely to have it. Developing asthma has been associated with environmental factors, like mold, air pollution, or secondhand smoke. Occupational exposures and viral lung infections have also been linked to developing asthma.

Symptoms:

Asthma causes wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and coughing at night or early in the morning or during exercise. Asthma attacks occur when something bothers your lungs.

Asthma



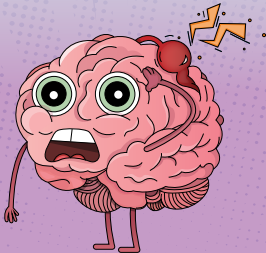
Prevention:

Asthma is inherited through your DNA from your parents but may be able to be controlled by avoiding asthma triggers like mold, air pollution, or secondhand smoke.

Treatment:

Asthma can be controlled with your doctor's help and by following an asthma action plan. Know the warning signs of an asthma attack and stay away from things that trigger an attack. Take medication for quick relief and long-term control exactly as directed.

Stroke



Risk Factors:

Stroke causes parts of the brain to become damaged or die. Risk factors include high blood pressure, high low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, diabetes, smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke, obesity, unhealthy diet, and physical inactivity.

Symptoms:

Sudden face drooping, arm weakness, and speech difficulty are all signs of a stroke. If you notice signs of a stroke, call 911 immediately.

Stroke



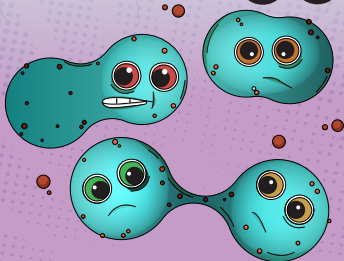
Prevention:

To help prevent a stroke: choose healthy food and drink, maintain a healthy weight and regular physical activity, don't smoke, avoid exposure to secondhand smoke, limit alcohol, check cholesterol and blood pressure, treat high blood pressure and diabetes, and take prescribed medication.

Treatment:

Medicine, surgery, or other procedures may be needed to treat a stroke and save brain tissue. Rehabilitation can help patients recover from strokes.

Cancer



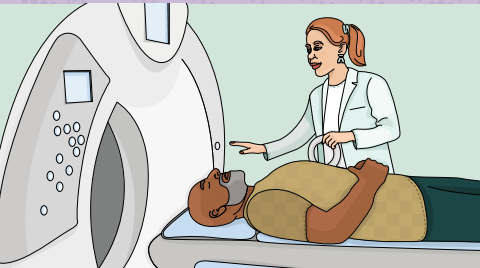
Risk Factors:

Risk factors for cancer include drinking alcohol, family history, obesity, HPV, smoking, and tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke.

Symptoms:

There are more than 100 types of cancer. Symptoms can vary depending on the type of cancer.

Cancer



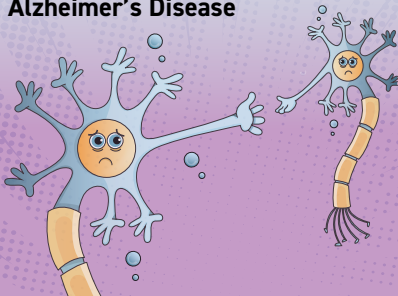
Prevention:

Not smoking or using tobacco products and avoiding exposure to secondhand smoke, protecting your skin from the sun, limiting the amount of alcohol you drink, and keeping a healthy weight lower risk. Screening tests may find some cancers early when treatment is likely to work best.

Treatment:

The treatment for cancer depends on the type of cancer and how far it has spread. Most treatment plans include surgery, radiation therapy, or chemotherapy.

Alzheimer's Disease



Risk Factors:

Age is the best-known risk factor for Alzheimer's disease, followed by family history. However, some behaviors, like lack of physical activity, and chronic conditions, like high blood pressure, may increase your risk for Alzheimer's disease.

Symptoms:

People with Alzheimer's disease have symptoms of worsening memory loss that interfere with daily life. These include problems with memory, attention, communication, reasoning, judgement, and decision-making.

Alzheimer's Disease



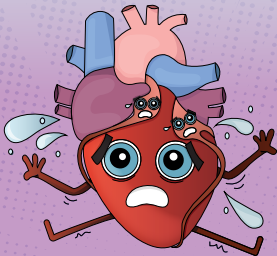
Prevention:

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive disease, but you may be able to lower your risk of Alzheimer's disease by being physically active, not smoking, and avoiding or managing other chronic illnesses like diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.

Treatment:

There is no cure for Alzheimer's disease. Some medicines can slow disease progression and manage symptoms.

Coronary Artery Disease



Risk Factors:

CAD is the most common type of heart disease in the U.S. High blood pressure and cholesterol, smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke, diabetes, obesity, poor diet, physical inactivity, and excessive alcohol use are key risk factors for CAD.

Symptoms:

The most common symptom is chest pain or discomfort. For many, the first sign that they have CAD is a heart attack. Common symptoms of a heart attack include chest pain, upper back or neck pain, fatigue, and shortness of breath.

Coronary Artery Disease



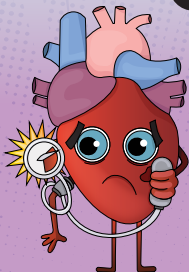
Prevention:

Controlling your blood pressure, eating healthy foods lower in sodium and fats, increasing physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight, and not smoking and avoiding exposure to secondhand smoke can help prevent CAD.

Treatment:

Surgical procedures may restore blood flow to the heart. Cardiac rehabilitation and lifestyle changes including more physical activity, eating a healthier diet, reaching a health weight, and quitting smoking can help. Take medications for high cholesterol and blood pressure.

High Blood Pressure



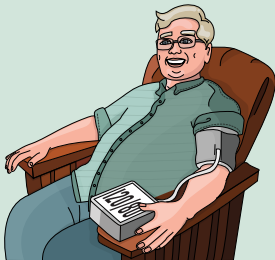
Risk Factors:

High blood pressure can put you at greater risk for heart disease, heart attacks, and strokes. Unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as smoking and a high sodium, low potassium diet, and certain health conditions, including diabetes and obesity, can increase the risk for developing high blood pressure.

Symptoms:

High blood pressure usually has no obvious warning signs or symptoms. Measuring your blood pressure is the only way to know whether you have high blood pressure.

High Blood Pressure



Prevention:

Help prevent high blood pressure by: measuring blood pressure regularly, taking medications prescribed by your doctor, getting enough physical activity, not smoking, eating a healthy diet, limiting sodium and alcohol, managing weight and stress.

Treatment:

Regularly measure your blood pressure and take your blood pressure medicine as directed. Make lifestyle changes, like eating a healthy diet and increasing physical activity.