

ISSUE BRIEF: CHRONIC DISEASE

Chronic disease results in serious illness and disability, decreased quality of life, and hundreds of billions of dollars in economic loss every year. Heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, obesity and arthritis, are among the most common and preventable of all health problems. Seven of the top 10 causes of death in the US are chronic disease and two—heart disease and cancer—together account for nearly 48% of all deaths. The risk of Americans developing and dying from chronic disease would be substantially reduced if major improvements were made in the US population in diet and physical activity, control of high blood pressure and cholesterol, and smoking cessation.

Key Facts:

- About ½ of adults in the US—117 million people—have 1+ chronic conditions. 1 in 4 adults have 2+ chronic conditions
- Leading causes of death in the US are heart disease, cancer and stroke
- High blood pressure affects 1 in 3 adults and more than ½ of Americans with high blood pressure do not have it under control.
- Arthritis is the most common cause of disability. Of the 53 million adults with a diagnosis of arthritis, 22 million say they have trouble with their usual activities because of the disease
- Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure, lower-limb amputations other than those caused by injury, and new cases of blindness in adults.
- Obesity is a serious concern. More than 1/3 of adults are obese (BMI ≥ 30 kg/m²). Nearly 1 in 5 youth age 2-19 are obese (BMI $\geq 95^{\text{th}}$ percentile)
- Fewer than 15% of adults and 10% of adolescents eat recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables each day
- Most Americans consume more than 2x the recommended average daily sodium level. Nearly 80% of sodium is consumed from packaged, processed, and restaurant food.
- At least 40% of adults and 80% of adolescents do not meet the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans
- Only 13% of children walk or bike to school, compared to 44% a generation ago
- The average 8- to 18-year-old is exposed to nearly 7.5 hours of passive screen time (TVs, smart phones, computers, video games, etc) every day

Healthy Eating

Healthy eating can help reduce people's risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis and several types of cancer, as well as help maintain a healthy body weight. As described in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, eating healthy means consuming a variety of nutritious foods and beverages, especially vegetables, fruits, fat-free dairy products and whole grains; limiting intake of saturated fats, added sugars, and sodium; keeping trans fat intake as low as possible and balancing caloric intake with calories burned to manage body weight. Safe eating means ensuring that food is free from harmful contaminants, such as bacteria and viruses

Physical Activity

Engaging in regular physical activity is one of the most important things people of all ages can do to improve their health. Physical activity strengthens bones and muscles, reduces stress and depression, and makes it easier to maintain a healthy body weight or reduce weight if overweight or obese. Even people who do not lose weight gain substantial benefits from regular physical activity, including lower rates of high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer. Healthy physical activity includes aerobic activity, muscle-strengthening activities and activities to increase balance and flexibility. As described by the *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, adults should engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week, and children and teenagers should engage in at least one hour of activity per day.

Social Determinants of Health

The burden of chronic disease is disproportionately distributed across the population. There are significant disparities based on gender, age, race/ethnicity, geographic area and socioeconomic status. Disease does not occur in isolation, and chronic disease in no exception. Chronic disease is significantly influenced by the physical, social and political environment, including maternal and child health, access to educational opportunities, availability of healthy foods, physical education and extracurricular activities in schools, access to healthy foods, quality of working conditions and worksite health, available of community support and resources and access to affordable, quality health care.

*Narrative adapted from **Healthy People 2020** and the **National Prevention Strategy***

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2015 COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Alpena, Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Emmet, Montmorency, Otsego, and Presque Isle counties

Tip of the Mitt Data

Obesity--adults: Adult obesity rates range from 27% in Charlevoix County to 35% in Alpena County in the 8-county region. Only Charlevoix (27%) and Emmet (28%) are below State rate of 32%.

Obesity—teens: Teen obesity rates range from 10% in Presque Isle County to 19% in Cheboygan County; 2 counties are below State rate (13%): Presque Isle (10%), Antrim (11%).

Lack of physical activity—adults: Statewide, 23% of adults do not engage in any physical activity other than their regular job. In the 8-county region, the proportion ranges from 18% in Emmet County to 26% in Presque Isle. Montmorency (24%), Otsego (25%) and Presque Isle (26%) counties exceed State rate.

Lack of physical activity—teens: The proportion of high school students who did not engage in 60 minutes of physical activity in 5 of the last 7 days ranges from 31% in Presque Isle County to 53% in Otsego County. For comparison, State rate is 50%.

Community Conversations

117 community members and representatives from local health departments, hospitals and other health care providers, social service agencies, schools, business, and government participated in a Community Conversation to answer the question, “What can we do here in this county to move closer to our vision of a healthy community?”, issues related to reducing chronic disease and/or obesity was identified as an action in the following counties:

ALP	ANT	CHX-EM	CHB	MON	OTS	PI
X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Major Forces of Change

Chronic Disease Coordinating Network: The Northern Health Plan is funding Health Department of Northwest (Northwest) Michigan to implement a comprehensive approach to chronic disease prevention and treatment guided by a cross-sector coalition with representatives from across the 8-county tip of the mitt region

Healthy Food Service Guidelines: 6 local health departments, including District Health Department #4 and Northwest, have received funding from MDHHS to increase the number of worksites complying with Healthy Food Service Guidelines

What Matters to You? Survey N=1,220

32% of community residents identified access to affordable healthy food as an important factor needed for a healthy community, ranking it 3rd after access to health care and good jobs/healthy economy. They identified the following as top community health problems in their county: substance use, obesity/overweight, and chronic disease. Respondents most often noted they had been diagnosed with overweight/obesity (70%), arthritis (57%), asthma (48%), high cholesterol (46%), dental health problems (45%), high blood pressure (44%) and chronic pain (43%)

Health Care Provider Survey N=126

Physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants ranked “healthy lifestyles” as the 3rd most important factor for a healthy community, following access to health care and good jobs/healthy economy. They identified obesity and overweight as the top community health problem, followed by mental health issues, lack of access to health care, substance use and tobacco use.

