

Top 5 Things That Kill Men

Foxnews.com

Wednesday, October 29, 2008

FOX NEWS By Katherine Tweed

There's a lot you can't control these days: the stock market, climate change, Monday Night Football. But you can manage much of your risk for the five most common killers of men. Lifestyle is crucial to living longer, and while genetics play a role, much of risk comes down to some tried and true advice: eat well, keep moving.

1. Heart disease. It's the leading cause of death in the U.S., and kills more than 300,000 men every year. High cholesterol, high blood pressure, inactivity and nutrition all play a role.

To minimize your risk, talk to your doctor about what cholesterol level is right for you. And watch out for sodium too, said Dr. Randy Wexler, associate professor of family [medicine](#) in the College of Medicine at Ohio State University.

"Cut your salt consumption and you can reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease by 25 percent," he said.

Little changes with moving can also make a big difference. The American Heart Association found that people, who moved for 30 minutes a day, even if they only exercised in 10-minute increments, reduced their risk for heart disease.

2. Cancer. Like most diseases, cancers are both genetic and environmental. Lung cancer, prostate and colon cancer are the deadliest for men.

"You can't change genetics. But high fat diets have been linked to every cancer," said Dr. Joel Heidelbaugh, assistant professor in the department of family medicine and urology at the University of Michigan.

Usually get a 12-ounce steak? Try an 8-ounce cut instead. If you can cut 500 calories a day, that's one pound a week. Twenty-percent of male cancer deaths are linked to obesity, according to American Cancer Society.

Diets high in fruits and vegetables lower the risk for all cancer, but replacing the vitamins and minerals from those foods with a supplement won't do the same thing, doctors say.

"Every time a study comes out on supplements we're very disappointed," said Lisa Young, a professor of nutrition at New York University.

The benefit of a diet high in beneficial chemicals just cannot be substituted with a pill, she said.

Young said eating fruits and veggies instead of popping supplements adds fiber to the diet, which can lower the risk of colon cancer. Fiber also helps you feel fuller longer. Staying satisfied can help you avoid high-sodium, high-fat foods with little nutritional value that can raise the risk for other diseases.

3. Accidents. Wexler often has to remind patients that when doctors say you should only have two alcoholic drinks a day, that includes beer. Men tend to [drink](#) more than women, and a regular beer has about 140 calories.

And while an accidental death is not a disease, it is the third leading cause of death for men — often from fatal car crashes involving alcohol. Keeping your beer consumption in check is an easy way to keep calories in check and make sober decisions.

Accidental prescription drug overdoses are also on the rise, according to the CDC. Be sure to go over proper dosages and any drug interactions with your doctor or pharmacist.

4. Stroke. Risks for stroke are often the same as risks for heart disease: smoking, obesity, poor nutrition, excessive alcohol intake and diabetes. Wexler tells his patients to try some or all of the [Diet Approaches to Stop Hypertension](#), or DASH.

Studies have shown this diet, which is high in fruits and vegetables, can reduce hypertension and cholesterol. Smoking and obesity can also increase hypertension, so exercise is key for stroke prevention. You don't have to run a marathon to reduce your risk. Instead, Wexler also recommends the [10,000 Steps program](#).

5. Chronic lower respiratory diseases. Emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are the two leading killers in this category. Smoking is the major risk factor, and the only way to really cut your risk is to kick the habit.

However, researchers at Columbia University in New York City showed that nitrites from cured meats were a risk for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. People who ate high amounts of cured meats, including lunch meats, hot dogs and sausage products, saw an increase in risk too.

“There’s nothing good or protective in cured meats,” Young said. Cured meats are also usually high in sodium and saturated fats, which can increase the risk for cardiovascular disease and stroke.

In addition to these five killers, obesity raises a man's risk for numerous diseases including heart disease, type II diabetes, stroke and many other chronic diseases. In addition to exercise, Wexler encourages overweight patients to stick with a new diet plan for six weeks. Whether it's cutting out a certain food, lowering your saturated fat, or just

eating less, it takes six weeks for the body to stop craving something. So break out a calendar and pick one item — the payoff might just be a longer life.