

Non-Communicable Diseases Fact Sheet

What are NCDs?

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), also known as chronic diseases, are not passed from person to person. They are of long duration and generally slow progression. Cardiovascular (heart) disease causes most NCD deaths (17.9 million people annually), followed by cancers, respiratory (breathing) diseases, e.g. asthma and diabetes. These 4 groups of diseases account for over 80% of all premature NCD deaths. These deaths are largely preventable.

Who is most vulnerable to NCDs?

NCDs kill around 41 million people each year, with 82% of deaths in low- and middle- income countries.

Children and the elderly are especially vulnerable to risk factors that contribute to NCDs.

The 4 main risks contributing to NCDs are unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, exposure to tobacco smoke or the harmful use of alcohol.

People living in poverty and vulnerable or socially disadvantaged people are at greater risk of NCDs. They are at greater risk of being exposed to tobacco and unhealthy diets and have less access to health services.

How can NCDs be prevented?

Prevention, early diagnosis and quick and effective treatment can help prevent NCDs.

Prevention includes educating people about risks and helping them to adopt healthy behaviours. For example, educating people about the risks of tobacco smoke and harmful alcohol intake and encouraging people to be more physically active and eat more healthily.

- 1.6 million deaths annually are from insufficient physical activity, so getting people to be more physically active can help to prevent this.
- Tobacco accounts for over 7.2 million deaths every year (including from the effects of exposure to second-hand smoke), so getting people to stop smoking can help to prevent this.

Other ways include helping mothers stay healthy during pregnancy, good nutrition, living in a healthy environment, preventing accidents and injuries and promoting good mental health and wellbeing.