

Module 9, Lesson 3 Handout:

Common Diseases Among Men in the US

The CDC reports that 12% of men aged 18 and over are in fair or poor health. Knowing the biggest health concerns for men, the top 10 killers in the US and the lifestyle factors that can lower risk of dying from these diseases will set you up for success in supporting your male clients' health.

Biggest Health Concerns for Men

1. Alcohol - Almost 31% of men aged 18 and over had five or more drinks in 1 day at least once in the past year. Alcohol use and abuse are linked to health problems that affect the heart, liver, weight management and so on.
2. Exercise - Or lack thereof, really. A 2018 report from the CDC found only 27.2% of men in the United States were meeting the basic recommendations for physical activity (strength training at least twice weekly and moderate aerobic exercise for at least 150 minutes per week or vigorous aerobic exercise for at least 75 minutes per week).
3. Smoking - Just under 16% of men in this country are currently smoking cigarettes, but this doesn't include vaping and electronic cigarettes. Beyond lung disease, we know that smoking cigarettes can be damaging to almost every system in the body as well as potential to interfere with sleep, exercise and appetite. Though the research is new in the world of vaping and e-cigs, it's becoming clear they aren't harmless and these products have been linked to hospitalizations and death, according to the CDC.
4. Obesity - Almost 37% of men over the age of 20 are obese, which we know puts men at risk for other conditions and even early death.
5. Hypertension - Over 33% of men in this country live with hypertension, putting heart health at risk.
6. Health Insurance - Over 12% of men under 65 live without health insurance.

Top 10 Killers

1. Heart disease is the number one killer for both men and women. It made up 24% of male deaths in 2017, our most recent statistic.
2. Cancer is number two, causing 22% of deaths. Many cancers are due to lifestyle factors and many of them are preventable.
3. Accidents are number three and alcohol related accidents contribute greatly to this. Remind clients of this and use it as another reason to work on reducing excess alcohol. A goal of 1 or

2 drinks per day is realistic and suitable for most men, though this may vary depending on the client.

4. Respiratory diseases come in fourth and many of them are linked to hypertension, diet and inactivity.
5. CVA, or stroke, takes 5th place, and similar to heart disease, risk of stroke is connected to lifestyle and self care.
6. Alzheimer's disease takes the next slot, and nutrition is essential to Alzheimer's prevention and progression.
7. Diabetes hits the charts in 7th place, typically from illnesses related to diabetes, like nephropathy and sepsis.
8. Influenza and pneumonia are next on the list. While practicing basic hygiene like handwashing can help prevent these illnesses in the first place, diet and lifestyle can influence the ability to recover from flu and pneumonia because we know our food choices can influence our immune systems. COVID-19 is still too new for us to have statistics but we do know that it is killing more men than women. And, we do know that all efforts to support the immune system will only be beneficial in reducing the risk along with proper hygiene and social distancing. One study also reported that high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes are risk factors for severe cases.
9. Kidney diseases are next to last. Some kidney diseases are lifestyle related, but not all.
10. Self harm and suicide. Mental health is such an important and often overlooked topic, and the reality is many men won't seek the help they might need. Nearly 1 in 10 men experience depression and anxiety, which puts them at risk for self harm.

Work with clients to adjust their behaviors including more healthful food choices, exercising, reducing stress, and getting enough sleep to help reduce risk of these diseases. Just remember, we're not trying to get our clients to some state of perfection. We're looking to meet them where they're at and make adjustments and improvements that we can build on so they can make lifelong empowering changes.