

## Big Tobacco, Big Food, Big Alcohol “Lifestyle Diseases”

Industrialized countries have done pioneering work over the past decades. We have evolved from gathering berries to drive-through and from walking up the stairs to taking a ride on an elevator. All of these advancements in society have created “a better world” for the people, but what we often misconstrue is that this dramatic progression in society has brought its own stuff of problems along. This “luggage” contains a variety of deadly conditions known as lifestyle diseases. These lifestyle diseases are harmful for our health and will continue affecting future generations if we do not put a stop to it. The only way to do so is to work toward prevention, the best medicine for lifestyle diseases. One of the major consequences of industrialization and modernization in society is lifestyle diseases. Lifestyle diseases are modern sicknesses that are caused or accelerated by the way we live our daily lives. This includes what we eat and the activities we do each day. Over time, wrong decisions take a negative toll on our bodies. Lifestyle diseases differ from other diseases because it is caused by the way we behave and live our lives and there are simple preventions. Unlike a cold, lifestyle diseases such as diabetes cannot be “cured” with a dose of cold medicine or by waiting it off, lifestyle diseases are chronic and must be treated properly. This proves that there are consequences to our daily decisions and actions; there are several factors which contribute to lifestyle diseases. Of course, for many of these lifestyle diseases, there are uncontrollable risk factors, such as age, gender, and race, but by limiting the controllable risk factors, we can prevent the lifestyle disease all together.

Alarming research reveals that youngsters now spend an average of 1-h and 50-min online and more than 2 h in front of the television every day.

A report released by research firm Childwise suggests that screens are increasingly turning into electronic babysitters and young people in the world are spending more time plugged in than ever.

It found that children spend more time in front of a screen in 1 day than they spend exercising in the entire week.

The worrying research found that 97% of 11–16-year-olds own a mobile phone – 8% more than the percentage of adults who own one.

Moreover, it showed that young girls have a voracious appetite for celebrity magazines.

The research confirms that the children spent only 2 h a week exercising in school and taking part in physical activity out of school.

It is seen that generally 77% of children in the age group of 11 to 16 years have easy access to television or personal



computer, and despite fears about online safety, almost half have Internet access in their own room.

Poor lifestyle choices such as smoking, overuse of alcohol, poor diet, and lack of physical activity and inadequate relief of chronic stress are key contributors in the development and progression of preventable chronic diseases, including obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and several types of cancer. Even though doctors encourage healthful behaviors to help prevent or manage many chronic medical conditions, many patients are inadequately prepared to either start or maintain these appropriate, healthy changes. Most of the patients understand the reasoning behind a healthy lifestyle even if they do not understand the disease processes that can occur when they do not maintain healthy habits. Despite an understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, many patients lack the behavioral skills they need to apply every day to sustain these good habits.

Nevertheless, healthy lifestyle modifications are possible with appropriate interventions, which include nutritional counseling, exercise training, and stress management techniques to improve outcomes for patients at risk and those who already have common chronic diseases.

Medical studies show that adults with common chronic conditions who participate in comprehensive lifestyle modification programs experience rapid, significant, clinically meaningful and sustainable improvements in biometric, laboratory, and psychosocial outcomes.

Prevention is remedies or activities that aim to reduce the likelihood of a disease or disorder affecting people. Lifestyle diseases are preventable for children if parents set them on the correct path, as early life decisions and influences can impact people later on in life. Lifestyle diseases can be prevented through reduction in smoking of tobacco; the Indian Government has started this by introducing cancer pictures on cigarette packaging for all tobacco products and increasing the prices of tobacco production. Overweight and obesity can be prevented

through a well-balanced lifestyle through healthy eating and exercise. Prevention can come about by a person undertaking 30 min of moderate exercise daily or by doing 150 min of moderate intensity exercise a week. Examples of moderate exercise include a brisk walk, swim, and it can also be everyday life activities such as mowing the lawn or house cleaning. All causes of lifestyle disease can be prevented through giving up smoking and other drugs, reducing one's intake of alcohol, processed meats, and fatty foods and by engaging in daily exercise. While the causes of chronic diseases in low- and middle-income countries are complex, experts and campaigners are increasingly pointing the finger at big business and the so-called "commercial determinants of health." "It is very clear that big tobacco, big food, and big alcohol are seeing many low and middle-income countries as their emerging target markets," as many tobacco companies in particular increasingly see Asia and Africa – which currently has a low level of female smokers – as a potential opportunity. Alongside awareness, a number of countries have also started to fight back against the marketing and consumption of unhealthy foods with tax on harmful foods and drinks.

This replicates the strategy in developing countries which have taken in tackling tobacco and alcohol consumption. The vital strategies, taxes, can go a long way to reducing consumption of unhealthy food and drinks. In addition, higher taxes on sugar can help people reduce the use of unhealthy products but also bring money to governments to put health policies in place. This is being followed vigorously in many developed countries. Mexico, where more than 70% of the population is overweight or obese, is already reaping benefits from such a levy.

Lifestyle diseases share risk factors similar to prolonged exposure to three modifiable lifestyle behaviors – smoking, unhealthy diet, and physical inactivity – and result in the development of chronic diseases, specifically heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity, metabolic syndrome, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and some types of cancer. These illnesses used to be considered the diseases of industrialized countries, so-called "Western diseases" or "diseases of affluence;" however, internationally, they are known as noncommunicable and chronic diseases, part of the degenerative disease group. Chronic disease can result in loss of independence, years of disability, or death and impose a considerable economic burden on health services. Today, chronic diseases are a major public health problem worldwide. In 2005, the World Health Organization estimated that 61% of all deaths – 35 million – and 49% of the global burden of disease were attributable to chronic diseases. By 2030, the proportion of total global deaths due to chronic diseases is expected to increase to 70% and the global burden of disease to 56%. The greatest increase is anticipated in the African, Asian, and Eastern Mediterranean regions.

The World Health Assembly adopted a resolution in 2000 on the prevention and control of chronic diseases. It called on its member states to develop national policy frameworks, taking into account healthy public policies as well as fiscal and taxation measures toward healthy and unhealthy goods and services. The resolution also asked to establish programs for the prevention and control of chronic diseases, assess and monitor mortality and the proportion of sickness in an area due to chronic diseases, promote effective secondary and tertiary prevention, and develop guidelines for cost-effective screening, diagnosis, and treatment of chronic diseases, with special emphasis in developing countries. The combination of four healthy lifestyle factors – maintaining a healthy weight, exercising regularly, following a healthy diet, and not smoking – seems to be associated with as much as an 80% reduction in the risk of developing the most common and deadly chronic diseases. This reinforces the current public health recommendations for the observance of healthy lifestyle habits, and because the roots of these habits often originate during the formative stages of life, it is especially important to start early in teaching important lessons concerning healthy living. However, despite the well-known benefits of a healthy lifestyle, only a small proportion of adults follow such a routine; in fact, the numbers are declining. Unfortunately, there is very little public awareness of the association between health and lifestyle. Many are unaware that a change in lifestyle is an important factor in the emergence of chronic diseases as causes of increased morbidity and mortality. Lifestyle is generally considered a personal issue. However, lifestyles are social practices and ways of living adopted by individuals that reflect personal, group, and socioeconomic identities. Modest but achievable adjustments to lifestyle behaviors are likely to have a considerable impact at the individual and population level. Health professionals and the media now repeatedly carry the message that to remain healthy, people need to adopt healthy behaviors. Physical activity, cessation of tobacco consumption, eating a high-fiber, low-fat diet, controlling body weight, and learning to cope with stress reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, cancer, and premature mortality. A comprehensive public health approach to tobacco control effectively inhibits the beginning of tobacco use and promotes its cessation, through a range of measures including tax and price policy, restriction on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, packing and labeling requirements, educational campaigns, restrictions on smoking in public places, and cessation support services. A comprehensive approach must include young people to reach the entire population. National policy measures known to have the biggest impact on individual levels of consumption, cessation rates, and initiation rates require sustained political will and engagement and above all, effective and well-enforced legislation. Furthermore, effective public health measures are urgently needed to promote physical activity and improve health around

the world. The challenge of promoting physical activity is as much the responsibility of governments, as of the people. However, individual action for physical activity is influenced by the environment, sports and recreational facilities, and national policy. It requires coordination among many sectors, such as health, sports, education and culture policy, media and information, transport, urban planning, local governments, and financial and economic planning.



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