

# Chronic Diseases and Health Promotion

Chronic diseases – such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, and arthritis – are among the most common, costly, and preventable of all health problems in the U.S.

## Chronic Diseases are the Leading Causes of Death and Disability in the U.S.

7 out of 10 deaths among Americans each year are from chronic diseases. Heart disease, cancer and stroke account for more than 50% of all deaths each year.<sup>1</sup>

In 2005, 133 million Americans – almost 1 out of every 2 adults – had at least one chronic illness.<sup>2</sup>

Obesity has become a major health concern. 1 in every 3 adults is obese<sup>3</sup> and almost 1 in 5 youth between the ages of 6 and 19 is obese (BMI  $\geq$  95th percentile of the CDC growth chart).<sup>4</sup>

About one-fourth of people with chronic conditions have one or more daily activity limitations.<sup>5</sup>

Arthritis is the most common cause of disability, with nearly 19 million Americans reporting activity limitations.<sup>6</sup>

Diabetes continues to be the leading cause of kidney failure, nontraumatic lower-extremity amputations, and blindness among adults, aged 20-74.<sup>7</sup>

## Four Common Causes of Chronic Disease

Four modifiable health risk behaviors—lack of physical activity, poor nutrition, tobacco use, and excessive alcohol consumption—are responsible for much of the illness, suffering, and early death related to chronic diseases.

More than one-third of all adults do not meet recommendations for aerobic physical activity based on the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, and 23% report no leisure-time physical activity at all in the preceding month.<sup>8</sup>

In 2007, less than 22% of high school students<sup>9</sup> and only 24% of adults<sup>10</sup> reported eating 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

More than 43 million American adults (approximately 1 in 5) smoke.<sup>11</sup>

In 2007, 20% of high school students in the United States were current cigarette smokers.<sup>12</sup>

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death, and cigarette smoking causes almost all cases. Compared to nonsmokers, men who smoke are about 23 times more likely to develop lung cancer and women who smoke are about 13 times more likely. Smoking causes about 90% of lung cancer deaths in men and almost 80% in women. Smoking also causes cancer of the voicebox (larynx), mouth and throat, esophagus, bladder, kidney, pancreas, cervix, and stomach, and causes acute myeloid leukemia.<sup>13</sup>

Nearly 45% of high school students report consuming alcohol in the past 30 days, and over 60% of those who drink report binge drinking (consuming 5 or more drinks on an occasion) within the past 30 days.<sup>14</sup>

A large number of studies provide strong evidence that drinking alcohol is a risk factor for primary liver cancer, and more than 100 studies have found an increased risk of breast cancer with increasing alcohol intake. The link between alcohol consumption and colorectal (colon) cancer has been reported in more than 50 studies.<sup>15</sup>

From the Center of Disease Control and Prevention