

Chinese need to exercise more, smoke less, new report says

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More than three million Chinese are dying prematurely each year from diseases that could be prevented with regular exercise and programs to cut smoking and alcohol abuse, the World Health Organization said in a report released Monday.

Worldwide, non-communicable diseases kill about 38 million people each year, including 8.6 million in China. Nearly half of those deaths could be prevented by reducing tobacco use and other risks that contribute to heart disease, cancer, obesity and diabetes.

Dr. Margaret Chan, WHO's director-general, said the world has the chance to reverse what she described as a public health "epidemic."

"By investing just US\$ 1-3 dollars per person per year, countries can dramatically reduce illness and death from NCDs," Chan said in a statement upon releasing the 2014 Global Status Report on Noncommunicable Diseases.

"In 2015, every country needs to set national targets and implement cost-effective actions. If they do not, millions of lives will continue to be lost too soon."

Since the 1980s, stepped-up public health efforts have dramatically improved life expectancies for many of China's 1.3 billion people. But as China's economy grows, its people confront some of the same health challenges faced by their affluent counterparts in the United States.

In the United States, heart-related diseases claim about 31 percent of the 2.3 million people who died annually of non-communicable diseases yearly. 31 percent are cardio related, 23 percent cancers.

China with population of 1.4 billion has 8.6 million die of NCDs yearly. 45 percent cardio, 23 percent cancers. and other countries:

According to WHO:

- More than 300 million Chinese are regular smokers, including half of all Chinese men.

- More than four in five adolescents aged 11 to 17 do not engage in sufficient physical activity

- About one in five adults have elevated blood pressure, which can lead to congestive heart failure.

According to the report, [heart disease](#) kills a higher percentage of Chinese suffering from non-communicable disease than it does Americans, but the two countries' cancer rates remain about the same.

In the United States, with a population of 318 million, heart-related diseases claim about 31 percent of the 2.3 million people who die annually of [non-communicable diseases](#) yearly. The rate in China, with a total population of 1.4 billion, is 45 percent of 8.6 million deaths. Approximately 23 percent of non-communicable disease deaths in each country are caused by cancer.

"This new report is a dramatic wake-up call," said Dr. Bernhard Schwartlander, WHO's representative in China. "There is an urgent need for strong action now - to stop millions of Chinese men and women dying in their most productive years from diseases that can be

prevented."

In China, WHO has advocated a mix of [public health](#) improvements, including full implementation of the international Framework Convention on Tobacco Control; replacement of trans fats with polyunsaturated fats; restrictions on alcohol advertising; promotion of breastfeeding and cervical cancer screening.

It has also made the argument that China's prosperity will be undermined if it doesn't control the medical and economic costs of preventable diseases. According to World Bank estimates, China could realize an economic gain of \$10.7 trillion between 2010-2040 if it reduced deaths from cardiovascular [disease](#) by just one per cent.

"In emerging economies like China, there is a real risk of the economic gains from rapid growth and economic development being wiped out by the economic losses from premature mortality, low productivity and workforce participation," said Chan on a visit to Beijing last year.

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