

The top 5 conditions that shorten Americans' lives—and are preventable

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(HealthDay)—More bad news for plus-sized Americans: Obesity is the

leading cause of preventable life-years lost in the nation, a new study finds.

Obesity steals more years than diabetes, tobacco, [high blood pressure](#) and high cholesterol—the other top [preventable health problems](#) that cut Americans' lives short, according to researchers who analyzed 2014 data.

"Modifiable behavioral risk factors pose a substantial mortality burden in the U.S.," said study lead author Glen Taksler, an internal medicine researcher at the Cleveland Clinic.

"These preliminary results continue to highlight the importance of weight loss, diabetes management and healthy eating in the U.S. population," Taksler said in a clinic news release.

Obesity was linked with as much as 47 percent more life-years lost than tobacco, his team said.

Tobacco, meanwhile, had the same effect on life span as high blood pressure, the researchers found.

The researchers noted that three of the top five causes of life-years lost—diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol—can be treated. And helping patients understand treatment methods, options and approaches can have a significant effect, the study authors said.

The findings also emphasize the importance of preventive care, and why it should be a priority for physicians, Taksler's team said.

However, the researchers acknowledged that some people's situations may be different than those of the general population. For example, for someone with obesity and alcoholism, drinking may be a more important risk factor than obesity, even though obesity is more significant in the

[general population](#).

"The reality is, while we may know the proximate cause of a patient's death—for example, breast cancer or heart attack—we don't always know the contributing factor(s), such as [tobacco](#) use, [obesity](#), alcohol and family history," Taksler said. "For each major cause of death, we identified a root cause to understand whether there was a way a person could have lived longer."

The findings were scheduled for presentation Saturday at the annual meeting of the Society of General Internal Medicine, in Washington, D.C. Research presented at meetings should be considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed medical journal.

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine offers [healthy living resources](#).

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