

Global evaluation of lifestyle risk factors in teens: 1 in 3 at risk

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The largest global investigation of the major lifestyle risk factors for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in adolescents has been undertaken in a study led by University of Queensland researchers.

The team examined World Health Organization data from 304,779 students aged 11-17 years from 89 countries, and found that 35 percent of adolescents had three or more lifestyle risk factors.

UQ School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences researcher Associate Professor Asad Khan said multiple risk factors increases the likelihood of poor health.

"NCDs, such as cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases, type 2 diabetes and cancers, are the leading causes of poor health and [premature death](#), accounting for seven out of 10 deaths globally each year," he said.

"Low fruit and vegetable intake, and [physical inactivity](#) were the most prominent lifestyle risk factors for NCDs among adolescents (86 percent and 85 percent, respectively).

"Overall, boys reported more [lifestyle risk factors](#) than girls.

"Adolescents in the American region had the highest rate of risk factors—56 percent of American teens had three or more risk factors, compared to 45 percent for the Western Pacific region.

"Smoking, alcohol, physical inactivity and unhealthy diet clustered in males, while physical inactivity, [sedentary behaviour](#) and poor diet clustered in females.

"Smoking and alcohol were paired together in both sexes across all regions."

Dr. Khan said the findings are of particular concern, as the precursors of NCDs are often manifested during childhood.

"Many of these behaviors acquired during adolescence tend to remain in adulthood, and exposure to each additional risk factor increases the future risk of poor health and premature death," he said.

"Early gender-specific prevention strategies targeting clusters of modifiable [risk factors](#), customized for WHO regions, should be prioritized to help mitigate current and future burden of [non-communicable diseases](#) globally."

More information: Riaz Uddin et al. Clustering of lifestyle risk factors for non-communicable diseases in 304,779 adolescents from 89 countries: A global perspective, *Preventive Medicine* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ypmed.2019.105955](#)

Provided by University of Queensland

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