

More than half of Americans on chronic meds

Blood pressure, cholesterol drugs are most widely used, new study shows

TRENTON, N.J. - For the first time, it appears that more than half of all insured Americans are taking prescription medicines regularly for chronic health problems, a study shows.

The most widely used drugs are those to lower high **blood pressure** and cholesterol — problems often linked to heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

The numbers were gathered last year by Medco Health Solutions Inc., which manages prescription benefits for about one in five Americans.

Experts say the data reflect not just worsening public health but better medicines for chronic conditions and more aggressive treatment by doctors. For example, more people are now taking blood pressure and cholesterol-lowering medicines because they need them, said Dr. Daniel W. Jones, president of the American Heart Association.

Endless advertising

In addition, there is the pharmaceutical industry's relentless advertising. With those factors unlikely to change, doctors say the proportion of Americans on chronic medications can only grow.

"Unless we do things to change the way we're managing health in this country ... things will get worse instead of getting better," predicted Jones, a heart specialist and dean of the University of Mississippi's medical school.

Americans buy much more medicine per person than any other country. But it was unclear how their prescriptions compare to those of insured people elsewhere. Comparable data were not available for Europe, for instance.

Medco's data show that last year, 51 percent of American children and adults were taking one or more prescription drugs for a chronic condition, up from 50 percent the previous four years and 47 percent in 2001. Most of the drugs are taken daily, although some are needed less often.

The company examined prescription records from 2001 to 2007 of a representative sample of 2.5 million customers, from newborns to the elderly.

Medication use for chronic problems was seen in all demographic groups:

- Almost two-thirds of women 20 and older.
- One in four children and teenagers.
- 52 percent of adult men.
- Three out of four people 65 or older.

Among seniors, 28 percent of women and nearly 22 percent of men take five or more medicines regularly.

An overwhelming amount

Karen Walker of Paterson, N.J., takes 18 prescription medicines daily for high blood pressure, diabetes, chronic back and shoulder pain, asthma and the painful muscle disorder fibromyalgia.

"The only way I can do it and keep my sanity ... is I use pill boxes" to organize pills for each morning and night, said Walker, 57, a full-time nurse at an HIV clinic. Her 69-year-old husband, Charles, keeps his medicines lined up on his bureau: four pills for arthritis and heart disease, plus two inhalers for lung problems.

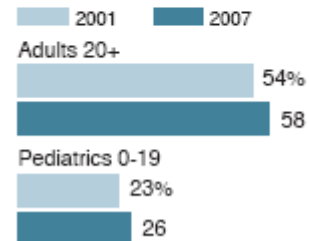
Dr. Robert Epstein, chief medical officer at Franklin Lakes, N.J.-based Medco, said he sees both bad news and good in the findings.

"Honestly, a lot of it is related to obesity," he said. "We've become a couch potato culture (and) it's a lot easier to pop a pill" than to exercise regularly or diet.

Chronic disease prescriptions up

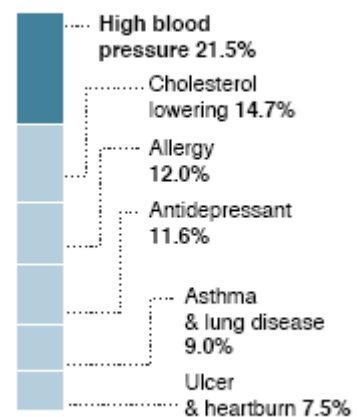
Last year, prescription drug use by adults with chronic conditions rose to 58 percent, up 4 percent since 2001. Drugs for high blood pressure are the most widely used.

Chronic medication users



NOTE: Prevalence of use is defined as one or more prescriptions for a chronic maintenance medication during the year.

Top six therapies for chronic medication users, 2007



SOURCE: Medco Health Solutions Inc. AP

On the good side, he said, researchers have turned what used to be fatal diseases into chronic ones, including AIDS, some cancers, hemophilia and sickle-cell disease.

Yet Epstein noted the biggest jump in use of chronic medications was in the 20- to 44-year-old age group — adults in the prime of life — where it rose 20 percent over the six years. That was mainly due to more use of drugs for depression, diabetes, asthma, attention-deficit disorder and seizures.

Antidepressant use in particular jumped among teens and working-age women. Doctors attributed that to more stress in daily life and to family doctors, including pediatricians, being more comfortable prescribing newer antidepressants.

Dr. Sidney Wolfe of Public Citizen's Health Research Group said the increased use of medications is partly because the most heavily advertised drugs are for chronic conditions, so most patients will take them for a long time. He also blames doctors for not spending the time to help patients lose weight and make other healthy changes before writing a prescription.

The study highlights a surge in children's use of medicines to treat weight-related problems and other illnesses previously considered adult problems. Medco estimates about 1.2 million American children now are taking pills for Type 2 diabetes, sleeping troubles and gastrointestinal problems such as heartburn.

"A scarier problem is that body weights are so much higher in children in general, and so we're going to have larger numbers of adults who develop high blood pressure or abnormal cholesterol or diabetes at an earlier age," said Jones, of the heart association.

Dr. Richard Gorman, an American Academy of Pediatrics expert on children's medicines, said more children are taking medicines for "adult conditions" partly because manufacturers now provide pediatric doses, liquid versions or at least information to determine the right amount for a child.

The Medco study found that among boys and girls under age 10, the most widely used medication switched from allergy drugs to asthma medicines between 2001 and 2007. Gorman said that's because over the last decade, asthma care has gone from treating flare-ups to using inhaled steroids regularly to prevent flare-ups and hospitalizations.

Epidemic of the 21st Century

Overweight, Sick Kids!

Children who watch TV while eating are twice as likely to eat "junk" food as opposed to fruits and vegetables.

Today's sedentary lifestyle for children is raising their risk of obesity, diabetes, osteoporosis and other disorders. Read how you can help reverse this alarming trend.

Today's parents are having their pediatrician tell them their 11-year-old son has Type 2 diabetes or their 16-year-old daughter has osteoporosis. The "out-of-control" lifestyles fashioned by the adults of the past 40 years has led to a 50% increase in the diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes—the kind of diabetes that used to be known as "adult onset" because this obesity-related disorder wasn't usually diagnosed until age 50 or older!

Making wellness a family affair

If we begin to place an emphasis on eating healthy foods and increasing activity levels in our children, we can reverse these alarming trends. Here are a few guidelines for dealing with overweight children. Be sure the child has been evaluated by a medical doctor to assure there are no reasons why losing weight would be a problem. Children can begin their day with a Dinomins multivitamin tablet and a shake made with nonfat milk or soy milk.

Stopping the epidemic

Choose to set the example of picking up an apple instead of an ice-cream bar. Stop smoking. Turn off the television or computer and shoot some hoops with your children or go for a walk. Be sure to take your dog so you won't have a fat dog at risk for diabetes and heart disease—yes, they develop the same diseases as humans! Let's make the 21st century the century of wellness, family values and quality of life. Let's start today.



Childhood obesity: Make weight loss a family affair

Preventing and treating childhood obesity requires the entire family. Here's how you can encourage a healthy weight in your home.

Children can't change their exercise and eating habits by themselves. They need the help and support of their families and other caregivers. This is why successful prevention and treatment of childhood obesity starts at home.

Childhood obesity is usually caused by kids eating too much and exercising too little. So creating new family habits around healthy eating and increased physical activity can help a child lose weight and can also improve the health of other members of the family.

Change family behaviors

Many behaviors contribute to childhood obesity, whether it's the time spent in front of the TV or computer or the types and amounts of food eaten. These behaviors or habits are hard to change within a family, especially if members aren't ready, willing or able to make changes. Small, progressive steps can help. Keep in mind the following helpful hints.

- **It's not a race.** The first rule of change is to not make changes too quickly. It takes time and dedication to unlearn unhealthy behaviors and to develop new, healthy ones.
- **Think small.** Small, gradual changes are easiest to follow and incorporate into your daily lives. And small changes can make a big difference over time. Pick a few small changes that seem doable, for example, turning off the TV during dinner, switching from soda pop to milk or water, or taking a walk after dinner once a week.
- **Set individual and family goals.** Goals need to be achievable and measurable. Set specific goals for each family member, and then determine family goals. For example, your child's goal might be to eat fresh fruits and vegetables for afternoon snacks, and the family's goal might be to eat out at a fast-food restaurant only once a month.

The new changes might take some time getting used to. But stick to the plan as best you can and evaluate your progress. Sometimes goals need to be adjusted if they don't work for the family. It's better to create a new plan than to stick to one that isn't working.

Create a healthy-weight environment

As you work toward healthy habits and behaviors, create a home environment that supports these efforts. For example, make sure healthy foods are readily available. Serve fruits and vegetables with meals and remove high-calorie, high-fat foods from the home, buying them just occasionally.

A healthy-weight environment also means that exercise and physical activity are built into the day's routine. Encouraging the kids to play outside — to ride bike or play a basketball game with friends, for example — is a good way to keep kids active. Organize family outings that involve physical activity, such as walking to the library or playing at a park.

Parents can also set rules for the home that help reinforce the healthy lifestyle. For example, limiting the time spent watching TV or playing video or computer games encourages children to find other more active pastimes.

Other ways to create a healthy-weight environment:

- Remove sugar-sweetened drinks from the home.
- Offer more whole-grain foods with meals and snacks.
- Reduce the number of meals eaten out at fast-food and other restaurants.
- Sit down together for family meals and have that meal last at least 30 minutes.
- Remove TVs and computers from children's bedrooms.

- Include children in active chores, such as washing the car or walking the dog.

As your family establishes healthy behaviors, be sure that all members — including parents — stick to the plan. For example, if you take the TV out of your child's bedroom, make sure to take the TV out of your bedroom as well. Consistency is crucial to creating a healthy-weight home.

Be a positive role model

The best way to get your child on board with the new, active lifestyle is to commit to the changes yourself. Your actions teach your child what to eat, how much to eat and when to eat. You also encourage your child to be physically active every day if you make it a priority yourself.

Here's how you can be a positive role model:

- Eat more healthy, nutritious foods.
- Control your portion sizes.
- Limit the number of treats and high-calorie snacks you eat.
- Be physically active every day.
- Limit the amount of time you spend watching TV or playing computer games.

Reward successful changes

Rewards for successful behavior changes keep your family motivated and more inclined to stick to the plan. Make a list of how your family has succeeded in changing certain eating and activity habits. Then celebrate your success. Rewards should be consistent with the goal and be given regularly, such as on a daily or weekly basis.

Celebrating progress can be as simple as offering your child praise and attention, or it could be more involved. Planning an activity the family likes to do together, such as skating or swimming, is a good option. Don't use food as a reward or punishment, however. You might unintentionally lay the groundwork for food-related power struggles.

A challenge for today's family

Making changes can be challenging, especially when today's families juggle busy schedules, time and money constraints, and other stressors and demands on daily living. But if your family works together and supports each others' efforts, then success is more likely.

Eventually the new changes will be incorporated into your family's everyday life and will be just the way things are done. Once healthy habits become routine, you're well on your way to maintaining a healthy weight and improving your health as a family.

Women & Estrogen

Women using hormone replacement should be aware of a recent study that found several risks.

Recent studies on female hormone replacement therapy have revealed that the risks outweigh the benefits. Find out about safe, natural alternatives to estrogen and progesterone replacement.

A recent study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published the principal results from the Women's Health Initiative¹. The study involved 16,608 women who took estrogen plus progesterone or a placebo to determine whether postmenopausal-estrogen replacement would help prevent heart disease and hip fractures. This study was also designed to determine whether there were risks associated with hormone-replacement therapy. The study was stopped after five years because the risks of therapy far outweighed the hope for benefits.

The conclusions of this landmark study are that women should not be using hormone replacement to prevent cardiovascular disease. The good news is that there are natural alternatives that successfully relieve these symptoms without the risks associated with prescription estrogen replacement.

Turn instead to:

Formula 1 Nutritional Shake Mix
Beverage Mix
Woman's Choice
Basic Cellular Nutrition Program (Formulas 1, 2, 3)

Herbalife makes it easy to enjoy the benefits of good health with products that address the specific health needs women face today. Check our Women's Solutions and Heart Health products in the Product Brochure for even more information about how to achieve good health and overall well-being.

Bone Health: The Hard Truth About Brittle Bones

There's plenty you can do to build healthy bones and maintain them as you age.

Our bones fight a never-ending battle against the causes of osteoporosis. Here are some tips for building healthy bone mass from childhood to adulthood.

Our bones fight a never-ending battle against the effects of hormone changes and general dietary and lifestyle factors—leaving both men and women with an increased risk of osteoporosis.

What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a disease of the bones that affects over 25 million Americans each year. Almost 80% of osteoporosis is found in women, although a growing number of older men are also at risk.

Healthy bones begin with childhood

Fortunately, there's plenty you can do to build healthy bones and maintain them as you age. Children should eat three to four servings of calcium-enriched foods every day to build healthy bones. As an adult, it's best to add a calcium supplement to your diet. Xtra-Cal® is packed with calcium, in addition to vitamin C and D, which helps absorb essential calcium.

Soy also appears to benefit bones, replacing calcium-depleting animal protein in the diet and providing a great source of bone-building isoflavones. Our Formula 1 Nutritional Shake Mix, Protein Bars, Soup Mix, Formula 3 Personalized Protein Powder, and Soy Nuts with Cardia® Salt are great sources of soy protein—making soy both "heart smart" and "bone smart!"

Making bone health a priority

Take control of your diet, increase your activity and curb such lifestyle habits as alcohol or smoking. With regular effort, you'll give yourself the very best chance of having healthy bones—no bones about it!

Men's top 10 health threats: Mostly preventable

What most threatens men's health? Find out the leading killers and how to reduce your risk.

Do you know what threatens men's lives the most? The list is surprisingly short.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2003, just over a million American men died. Nearly 80 percent of them died of heart disease or one of the nine other leading causes of death among American men.

Here's a snapshot of the 10 leading killers of American men in 2003, the most recent year for which these statistics are available from the CDC:

Rank	Cause	Percentage of male deaths
1	Heart disease	28.0
2	Cancer	24.0
3	Unintentional injuries	5.9
4	Stroke	5.1
5	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)	5.1
6	Diabetes	2.9
7	Influenza and pneumonia	2.4
8	Suicide	2.1
9	Kidney disease	1.7
10	Alzheimer's disease	1.5
Total		78.7

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2003

These CDC statistics show men are at higher risk of death than are women in most of these categories. As a result, the average American man lives 5.3 fewer years than does the average woman. In 2003, male life expectancy was 74.8 years. Female life expectancy was 80.1 years.

It's unclear why men have a shorter life span than women do. Inherited traits and male sex hormones may play a role, affecting such characteristics as body fat distribution. Specifically, men are more likely to accumulate fat around the abdomen (apple-shape obesity), which is associated with an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer and stroke. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to put on extra weight around the hips (pear-shape obesity). While unhealthy, this type of fat distribution is not linked as closely to potentially fatal conditions.

Socially sanctioned "male" behavior also may predispose men to premature death. CDC statistics show men are more likely to smoke, drink, use illicit drugs and engage in casual sex than are women — all of which can increase their risk of serious diseases. Males are also more likely to take risks and behave aggressively, which may partly explain why they have a higher risk of dying from accidents, suicide and homicide. Young men are especially at risk.

In young men, accidents, suicide and homicide are among the most frequent causes of death. In young and middle-aged men, AIDS is on the top 10 list.

While experts are continually working to understand the underlying causes of death in men, one thing is clear: By recognizing the leading threats to your life, you can take steps to reduce your risks — and avoid the leading causes of death.

No. 1 — Heart disease

According to the American Heart Association, in 2004, over 410,000 men died of cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death in both sexes. Because men usually develop heart disease 10 to 15 years earlier than women do, they're more likely to die of it in the prime of life. About one-fourth of all heart-disease-related deaths occur in men ages 35 to 65.

You can reduce your risk of heart disease by making healthier lifestyle choices and getting appropriate treatment for other conditions that can increase your risk of coronary artery disease, such as high cholesterol, diabetes and high blood pressure. Some preventive measures you can take:

- Don't smoke or use other tobacco products.
- Eat a varied diet rich in fruits and vegetables, and avoid high-fat foods.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week.
- Have your cholesterol tested.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar under control.
- Get regular blood pressure checks.
- Take a daily dose of aspirin, if your doctor OKs it.

No. 2 — Cancer

In 2003, the CDC recorded nearly 288,000 men who died of cancer, the second-leading cause of death for both sexes. Lung cancer — 90 percent of it caused by cigarette smoking — is the most common cause of cancer death in both sexes. In 2003, 89,964 men died of lung cancer.

The CDC also notes that prostate cancer and colorectal cancer are the second- and third-leading causes of cancer death in men.

Some preventive measures you can take:

- Don't smoke or use other tobacco products.
- Eat a varied diet rich in fruits and vegetables, and avoid high-fat foods.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week.
- Limit your exposure to sun and use sunscreen.
- Drink alcohol only in moderation, if at all.
- Be aware of potential cancer-causing substances (carcinogens) in your home and workplace, and take steps to reduce your exposure to these substances.
- Have regular preventive health screenings.
- Know your family medical history and review it with your doctor.

No. 3 — Unintentional injuries

In 2003, accidents killed 70,532 men, according to the CDC. Motor vehicle crashes were the leading cause. More than twice as many men as women died in traffic accidents. Male drivers involved in such accidents were almost twice as likely as female drivers to be intoxicated. To reduce your chances of a fatal crash:

- Use your seat belt every time you drive.
- Don't exceed speed limits.
- Don't drive after drinking alcohol.
- Don't drive while sleepy or under the influence of drugs.

The CDC recorded poisoning as the second-leading cause of fatal unintentional injury to men in 2003 — 13,176 men died of it. In comparison, 6,281 women died of poisoning that year. To reduce your risk of poisoning:

- Place carbon monoxide and smoke detectors near bedrooms in your house.
- Have fuel-burning appliances inspected each year.
- Store household products in their original containers.
- Read and follow label instructions for household products.
- Turn on a light when giving or taking medicine and follow label instructions.
- Ventilate areas in which you use chemical products.
- Post the poison control number, 800-222-1222, by each telephone in your home.

Falls and drowning were the third- and fourth-leading causes of fatal unintentional injury to men. In 2003, falls caused 8,910 deaths among men, compared with 8,319 deaths among women. Drowning accounted for 2,632 deaths among men and 674 deaths among women.

Common-sense precautions such as using a safety ladder, placing nonskid mats in showers and tubs, and never swimming alone in a large or unfamiliar body of water can reduce the risks.

Workplace accidents — which include some vehicle crashes, poisonings, falls and drowning — are a significant cause of fatal injury to men, partly because men are concentrated in dangerous occupations such as agriculture, mining and construction.

No. 4 — Stroke

In 2004, over 58,000 men died of stroke, according to the American Heart Association. Although stroke affects equal proportions of men and women, men have better chances of surviving than women do. You can't control some stroke risk factors, such as family history, age and race, but you can control the leading cause — high blood pressure — as well as contributing factors such as smoking and diabetes.

Additional preventive measures:

- Lower your intake of cholesterol and saturated fat. Get your cholesterol checked.
- Get regular blood pressure checks, and if it's higher than normal, take measures to control it.
- Don't smoke.
- Control diabetes.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week.
- Manage stress.
- Limit alcohol consumption.
- Talk with your doctor about taking a daily dose of aspirin.

No. 5 — Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

In 2003, according to the American Lung Association, 60,714 men died of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a group of chronic lung conditions that includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. It's strongly associated with lung cancer, the leading cause of cancer deaths among men. The main cause is smoking. Men who smoke are 12 times as likely to die of COPD as are men who've never smoked.

Some preventive measures you can take:

- Don't smoke.
- Avoid secondhand smoke.
- Minimize exposure to workplace chemicals.

No. 6 — Diabetes

The American Heart Association reports that in 2004, 35,000 men died of diabetes, a disease that affects the way the body uses blood sugar (glucose). Excess body fat, especially around the middle, is an important risk factor for diabetes. About 80 percent of people who have the disease are overweight or obese.

The diabetes complications most likely to be fatal are heart disease and stroke, which occur at two to four times the average rate in people with diabetes. Men with diabetes haven't benefited as much from recent advances in heart disease treatment as have men without diabetes.

An estimated one-third of men with the most common form of diabetes don't know they have it. Many are unaware of the disease until they develop complications such as impotence (erectile dysfunction), nerve damage causing pain or loss of sensation in the hands or feet, vision loss, or kidney disease.

Some preventive measures you can take:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat a varied diet, rich in fruits, vegetables and low-fat foods.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week.
- Get your fasting blood sugar level checked periodically.
- Know your family's diabetes history and discuss it with your doctor.

No. 7 — Influenza and pneumonia

In 2003, 28,778 men died of pneumonia and influenza, according to the CDC. These lung infections are especially life-threatening to people whose lungs have already been damaged by COPD, asthma or smoking. The risk of death from pneumonia or influenza is also higher among people with heart disease, diabetes or a weakened immune system due to AIDS or immunosuppressive drugs.

You can reduce your risk of complications and death from pneumonia and influenza by getting immunized. A yearly flu shot is up to 90 percent effective in preventing influenza in healthy adults. The pneumococcal vaccine can reduce the risk of getting pneumonia by more than half.

No. 8 — Suicide

In 2003, the CDC noted 25,203 men committed suicide. Men commit suicide four times as often as women do, partly because they're more likely to use deadlier means — such as firearms — when they set out to take their own lives. Depression — which is estimated to affect 7 percent of men in any given year — is an important risk factor for suicide. But male depression is underdiagnosed, partly because men are less likely than women are to seek treatment for it. In addition, men don't always develop standard symptoms such as sadness, worthlessness and excessive guilt. Instead, they may be more likely to complain of fatigue, irritability, sleep disturbances and loss of interest in work or hobbies. Alcohol or drug abuse — which is more common in men — can mask depression and make it more difficult to diagnose.

People at risk of suicide may:

- Be depressed, moody, socially withdrawn or aggressive
- Have suffered a recent life crisis
- Show changes in personality
- Feel worthless
- Abuse alcohol or drugs
- Have frequent thoughts about death
- Talk about death and self-destruction

If you find yourself avoiding others, feeling hostile and worthless, thinking about death and using alcohol and drugs to numb your pain, talk with your doctor. In an urgent situation, an emergency room or crisis center can help. Friends or family members may be the first to notice your uncharacteristic behavior. Take their advice and seek help. If you or someone you love is depressed, remove any access to firearms in the home. Don't expect to be able to overcome the feelings of depression without medical help. This is a disease, not something you can "snap out of."

No. 9 — Kidney disease

Kidney failure, most often a complication of diabetes or high blood pressure, took the lives of 20,481 men in 2003 says the CDC. Control of diabetes and high blood pressure can prevent or slow the progression of kidney disease.

Another cause of kidney failure is overuse of medications such as aspirin and ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, others) that are toxic to the kidneys.

Some preventive measures you can take:

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Exercise regularly.
- Maintain your proper weight.
- Don't smoke.
- Get checked regularly for diabetes and high blood pressure.
- Limit your use of over-the-counter pain relievers.
- Take all medications only as directed.

No. 10 — Alzheimer's disease

About 4.5 million older Americans — both men and women — have Alzheimer's disease. In 2003, 18,335 men died of Alzheimer's, which usually develops in people age 65 or older. But statistically there are more women who have the disease, because women live longer than men — and the older you are, the more likely you are to have Alzheimer's. The American population has more and more older adults each year. Consequently, the number of people with Alzheimer's has more than doubled since 1980 and continues to increase. As men live longer because of improved treatments for other conditions, they are more likely to die of Alzheimer's.

Although experts are doing promising research into preventing Alzheimer's, currently there's no proven way to prevent the onset of the disease. Taking steps to improve your cardiovascular health may help:

- Lose weight if you're overweight.
- Exercise regularly.
- Control your blood pressure.
- Keep your cholesterol levels in normal ranges.

While there is some controversy about whether it's effective, some research indicates doing intellectually challenging activities may help delay the onset of dementia. It certainly can't hurt — and it may help maintain your mental fitness.

Putting health risks into perspective

It's important to understand that this ranking of health risks applies to the entire population of American men, no matter what their age. Although heart disease is the No. 1 lifetime health threat to men, it tops all other causes of death among men in only two age groups: ages 45 to 54, and age 65 and over. From childhood until age 44, accidents are the most significant threat to men's lives. Cancer emerges as the leading killer only in men ages 55 to 64.

The top killers also vary somewhat among men from different ethnic groups. Black men, whose life expectancy is shorter than that of men from other races, are at higher risk of death by homicide and AIDS. American Indian men are more likely to die of chronic liver disease and cirrhosis. More white men die of Alzheimer's disease than do men from other groups. In men of Asian or Pacific Island descent, the top two killers are the same as for men of other ethnic groups, but their order is reversed — they are more likely to die of cancer than of heart disease. Hispanic men are at higher risk of death by accidental injury, at least partly because the population of Hispanic men is younger than average.

The bottom line: Be concerned about health risks, but don't panic. Do all you can to lead a healthy lifestyle — eat healthy foods, stay physically active, don't smoke, get regular checkups and guard against accidents. By making these preventive measures a way of life, you'll increase your chances of staying vital and active into your 80s and 90s — well beyond the statistical average of 74.8.