

Gerontology: October 15, 2012

## **Preventing Chronic Disease & Living with Chronic Conditions**

### **How do we define health?**

*Good health:* State of complete physical, mental, & social well-being.

*Health status:*

- Presence/absence of disease
- Degree of disability

*Disability:* Impairment in the ability to complete multiple daily tasks; need for assistance with ADLs.

### **Disability/ADL Limitations**

*Disability related to:*

- Lifestyle factors (exercise, smoking)
- Older age (oldest old)
- Gender: More likely for women
- SES: More common for lower SES
- Race-ethnicity: More common for African Americans

Good news?

- Disability rates have declined; managing chronic health conditions

### **Chronic Health Conditions**

- More than 80% of those 70 & over have at least 1 chronic condition

*What are chronic health conditions?*

- Long-term (more than 3 months)
- Often permanent; may require long-term management or cure vs. cure

### **Chronic Conditions**

*Development course:* Rare in early adulthood, more likely in midlife, and most common in later life.

*Co-morbidity:* Co-existence of 2 or more chronic or psychiatric conditions.

### **Quality of Life**

- Combination of functional health, feeling of competence, autonomy in performing ADLs, and satisfaction with one's social circumstances.

- Majority of older adults rate their health as good to excellent

*What characteristics might contribute to a lower quality of life?*

## **Cardiovascular Disease**

Leading cause of death over age 65

*Atherosclerosis*: Coronary artery disease

*Myocardial infarction*: Heart Attack

Symptoms differ for older adults:

- Generalized sense of weakness
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Shortness of Breath

*Hypertension*: High blood pressure

- Increases risk of stroke & coronary heart disease
- Higher among African Americans

*Hypotension*: Low blood pressure

*Stroke*: Portion of brain denied blood

- Highest risk for African Americans & men before 75
- Higher risk for women after age 75

## **Measures to Reduce Cardiovascular Disease Risk**

- Control weight
- Engage in daily physical activity
- Manage diabetes
- Reduce intake of salt, saturated fat, & processed carbohydrates
- Increase intake of fruits rich in potassium (bananas and oranges), and vegetables rich in magnesium.
- Increase intake of foods high in calcium
- Replace animal fat with olive oil
- Avoid partially hydrogenated oils
- Prevent cigarette smoking
- Avoid excessive alcohol intake

## **Cancer**

- 60% of new cancers; 70% of cancer-related deaths occur in people 65+

- Older women: Breast cancer
- Older men: Prostate cancer

- For survivors, cancer can be chronic vs. life threatening in some cases

- Greater risk with age; more difficult to diagnose in later life

## **Arthritis:**

- Second most common chronic disease

*Rheumatoid arthritis*: Inflammation of joints & tendons

Symptoms: Pain, swelling, bone dislocation, & limited range of motion

Treatment: Medications, exercise, physical therapy, & surgery

**Osteoarthritis:** Gradual degeneration of the joints of the hands, knees, hips, & shoulders.

- Most prevalent for women 85+

Related to heredity & lifestyle factors:

- Obesity
- Occupational stresses
- Wear and tear on the joints

Therapies: anti-inflammatory drugs, exercise, heat & cold, surgery

### **Osteoporosis**

- Extreme form of bone loss

- More common for women; small stature & low body weight

- Greatest bone loss during/after menopause

- Related to:

- Deficiencies in calcium
- Vitamin D
- Estrogen Depletion
- Lack of exercise

Symptoms/Health Issues: Back pain, bent spine, & increased risk of fractures

Treatment: Medications, exercise, & sometimes HRT (increased risk of breast cancer, heart disease, & stroke)

### **Preventing Osteoporosis:**

- Bone density scan
- Increased intake of calcium daily
- Increased intake of Vitamin D
- Weight bearing exercise (walking)
- Possibly medications
- No smoking

### **Diabetes**

- Above-normal glucose (sugar) in blood & urine

- Inability to create or effectively use insulin

- Type I diabetes
- Type II diabetes (most common form)

Treatment: Medications, diet, and exercise

Pre-diabetes: blood glucose is higher than normal but lower than the diabetes range.