



FIVE LIFESTYLE CHANGES TO REDUCE FIFTY PER CENT OF HEALTH PROBLEMS OF HUMANITY

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ABSTRACT

Health care problems are increasing all over the world. And health care issues are not going away. Of course there is no panacea that can solve all health problems. Medical treatment can only mitigate health problems. But rather strangely despite government and people spending so much on health problems and people suffering so much not adequate attention is being paid to life style changes that can reduce fifty per cent of all health problems. The author is not a medical doctor and that is just as well, because non medicos can focus on life style issues to resolve health problems even as doctors focus on medical treatment.

KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION

While the world has controlled many infectious diseases such as polio, TB, small pox due to sanitation and vaccination especially in developed nations, there are many lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, heart diseases, cancers that still ail the humanity. The surprising thing that while it is possible to reduce 50% of life style diseases by simple and easy lifestyle changes, it is shocking that medical community and governments of nations of world are not doing their best to ensure that people adopt these life style changes.

Life style changes suggested are simple

1. Vigorous exercise for around 2 hours a week
2. Quitting Tobacco
3. Avoiding Alcohol
4. Mindfulness Meditation for an hour a day
5. Two Meal High Carb Diet

Let us discuss each of these in detail. Governments of Nations of World have a big role in making interventions in these areas.

Quitting Tobacco

According to WHO, Tobacco causes 6 million deaths per year. According to the New England Journal of Medicine, Tobacco will kill 1 billion people in 21st century if current smoking patterns persist. The United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention describes tobacco use as "the single most important preventable risk to human health in developed countries and an important cause of premature death worldwide."

Tobacco leads diseases affecting heart, liver and lungs. Smoking is major risk factor for infections like pneumonia, heart attacks, strokes, chronic pulmonary disease(COPD), and many cancers(lung, larynx, bladder and pancreatic. It causes peripheral arterial diseases and high blood pressure.

Tobacco is entirely a choice. Governments can impose high taxes, carry adequate negative advertisements and insist on nicotine replacement therapy. However governments and doctors are not making adequate effort to control Tobacco consumption.

Tobacco control can reduce at least 10% of all health problems.

Avoiding Alcohol

Alcohol consumption causes 3 million deaths per year as well as disabilities and poor health of millions of people. Overall alcohol is responsible for 5% of disease burden – 7% for males and 2 % for females. Alcohol is responsible for 10% of deaths in 15-49 age groups. Alcohol is responsible for range of mental

and behavioral problems including alcohol dependence. Harmful use of alcohol is causal factor in 200 diseases. Almost 20 to 40% of hospital admissions are due to complications of alcohol. The unfortunate part is that doctors do permit some alcohol consumption. High taxes on alcohol, medical treatment for alcohol withdrawal and adequate negative advertisements can reduce alcohol consumption drastically. Alcohol control can reduce at least 10% of health problems.

Vigorous Exercise for around 2 hours a week

There are almost 168 hours a week. And all we need to do is to vigorously exercise for 1 % of time for improving fitness and health and reduce disease burden. 1% of time is 1.68 hours or almost 100 minutes. Investing 1% of time in health is easy. Exercise can reduce risks of heart diseases, diabetes, blood pressure, cancers, asthma arthritis, depression etc. Lack of exercise is major cause of diseases. Indeed exercise is medicine.

In fact it is safe to say that 10% of all health problems can be reduced by vigorous exercises alone. Governments must insist that people engage in vigorous exercise for 100 minutes a week (1% of time) or moderate exercise for 200 minutes a week(2% of time) or mild exercise for 400 minutes a week(4% of time). It is a culture that can be created.

Mindfulness Meditation for 1 hour a day

Stress can cause various health problems such as diabetes, heart diseases, obesity, depression. Nearly 43% of adults suffer from adverse health issues due to stress. 75% of medical problems are due to stress related issues. 50% of emotional disorder prevalence is due to stress.

Now exercise can reduce stress to some extent. However considerable amount of stress is work related and family related and is sometimes out of our control. One thing that is under our control is Meditation.

There are many kinds of meditation. But one that seems to have medical approval is that of Mindfulness Meditation which has been studied in great detail by Jon Kabat Zinn, a professor of medicine. Furthermore Mindfulness meditation does not require faith of any mantra that can offend people of different religions and hence is very secular.

Mindfulness meditation is basically closing eyes and watching thoughts and breath and as you do so you find that thoughts reduce and there is peace and joy.

Meditation is shown to reduce stress hormone - cortisol -by as much as 20% a significant reduction which can reduce severity of many health problems. Meditation can reduce 10% of health problems.

Two Meal High Carbohydrate Diet

Health risks of obesity are well known. And almost 30-40% of population is overweight. From diabetes to psoriasis, to heart condition to blood pressure, from cancer to kidney problems everything is related to obesity.

However weight control is very difficult. But there is hope. Dr Jagannath Dixit is evangelising 2 meal per day diet, which is effortless to follow. The idea is to control the insulin generated. Every time we eat a meal, insulin is generated. And high insulin causes us to store fats and low insulin helps us to burn fats.

The best part is this diet is rather easy to follow. And one can follow this diet for entire life. Whereas most diet plans do reduce weight in short term it is found that in long term the weight loss is not sustainable due to difficulty of these diets. But two meal diet is easy to follow in long term as well. Medicines to be taken can be taken along or before these two meals.

Indeed this 3 meal pattern with lot of snacks in between (drinks included) is unnatural. Whereas 2 meal diet is natural and way humans were meant to be. Of course it takes 2 to 4 weeks to adjust to 2 meal diet. But once you get into two meal diet, it is difficult to get out of it.

And 2 meal diet reduces weight slowly in 90- 95% of cases. Second part is realizing that high protein diet can cause lots of health problems by increasing metabolic burden on kidneys and liver.

In fact in most carb rich food – rice, wheat and potato - at least 10% is protein and in lentils as much as 25% is protein. So even if you take completely vegan diet with no animal food you get adequate protein defined as 0.8 gram per kg of body weight. After all if you take 2500 calories diet with 10% protein then you still get 60 grams of protein which is adequate for person weighing 75 kg.

High fat diet is related to cancer and heart diseases and diabetes and blood pressure. Hence diet should have less than 10% fat content. So an almost vegetarian diet of high carb can provide adequate protein and enough fats to reduce health problems due to high protein and high fats.

And two meal diet can help in reducing weight by reducing insulin in an easy and effortless and simple and natural manner. Thus controlling obesity can reduce health problems by another 10%.

CONCLUSION

There are at least 1000 medical diseases in the world that humans suffer from. It would be a travesty of truth to suggest that life style changes can eliminate all health problems of humanity. But it would not be an exaggeration to submit that these 5 life style changes – avoiding alcohol, quitting tobacco, vigorous exercise for 2 hours a week, mindfulness meditation for 1 hour a day and two meal high carb diet to effortlessly reduce weight can reduce health problems of world by at least 50%. That is significant reduction in health problems of world with simple and sustainable lifestyle choices. The developed world has significantly reduced burden of infectious disease and now by simple lifestyle choices lifestyle diseases can also be reduced.

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