10 DIRE HEALTH DANGERS FOR MEN

More than half of male deaths in the United States are from heart disease and cancer, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The top 10 list of fatal health threats accounts for nearly 80 percent of all deaths among American men. The good news is that most of those threats are preventable.

1. HEART DISEASE. Men usually develop heart disease 10 to 15 years earlier than women. About one-fourth of heart disease-related deaths occur in men ages 35 to 65.

2. CANCER. Lung cancer, usually the result of smoking, is the most common cause of cancer deaths in both sexes. Prostate cancer and colorectal cancer, both of which are associated with a high-fat diet, are the second and third leading causes of cancer deaths in men.

3. ACCIDENTS. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of accidental deaths. More than twice as many men as women die in traffic accidents. Trucking is a dangerous occupation, because of highway collisions and other workplace accidents.

4. STROKE. Although stroke occurs more equally among men and women, men have a better chance of surviving. You can’t control some stroke risks, 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.

5. CHRONIC LOWER RESPIRATORY DISEASES. Chronic lung conditions including emphysema and bronchitis are strongly associated with lung cancer. Men who smoke are 12 times more likely to die of one of these diseases than men who never smoked.

6. DIABETES. The diabetes complications that are most likely to be fatal are heart disease and stroke, which occur at two to four times the average rate in people with diabetes. Many men with diabetes are unaware of the condition until they develop complications such as impotence, vision loss, kidney disease or pain or loss of sensation in the hands or feet.

7. PNEUMONIA AND INFLUENZA. These lung infections are especially life-threatening to people whose lungs have already been damaged by asthma or smoking. The risk of death is also higher among people with heart disease, diabetes or a weakened immune system. A yearly flu shot is up to 90 percent effective in preventing influenza in healthy adults.

8. SUICIDE. Men commit suicide four times as often as women do. Depression, which affects about 7 percent of men, is an important risk factor for suicide.

9. KIDNEY DISEASE. Kidney failure is most often a complication of diabetes or high blood pressure. Another cause is the overuse of medications, such as aspirin and ibuprofen, that are toxic to the kidneys.

10. CHRONIC LIVER DISEASE AND CIRRHOSIS. The leading cause is alcoholism, which takes a heavy toll on men in general. Other leading causes of chronic liver disease and cirrhosis include hepatitis B and C and certain inherited diseases.

REDUCE RISK

The best way to avoid most fatal health problems is to make wise lifestyle choices and to get treatment for damaging conditions, such as high cholesterol, diabetes and high blood pressure. In addition:

- Don’t smoke or use other tobacco products.
- Eat a varied diet rich in fruits, veggies and low-fat foods.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise, even if it’s just a brisk walk, most days of the week.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Get enough sleep so that you’re not chronically tired.