

Global Death Rates from Chronic Disease Decline While US Progress Stalls

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Global death rates from chronic diseases dropped in four out of five countries between 2010 and 2019, but the U.S. experienced the weakest improvement among wealthy nations
- › Heart disease and stroke accounted for the largest share of progress worldwide, showing how treating circulatory problems saves lives
- › Rising deaths from pancreatic and liver cancers, along with neuropsychiatric conditions, are slowing overall progress and leaving millions more at risk
- › Everyday exposures like seed oils, plastics, and hormone-disrupting chemicals overload your cells, raising inflammation and driving disease
- › You can lower your risk by removing seed oils, improving gut health, limiting EMF exposure, clearing toxins from your food and home, and supporting energy with sunlight, movement, sleep, and niacinamide

Americans are losing ground on health, with life expectancy slipping even as other nations continue to extend theirs. Around the world, chronic illnesses that once cut lives short are now being managed more effectively, giving people a better chance at living into old age.

These conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, cancers, and lung disease, are not contagious but develop slowly and often last for years. They damage quality of life through symptoms like chest pain, fatigue, memory loss, or breathing difficulties, and when left unchecked, they lead to early death or long-term disability. The reality is stark: while many countries have made measurable progress in reducing early deaths from chronic disease, the U.S. has not kept pace.

Despite enormous spending on health care, Americans continue to face some of the weakest improvements among wealthy nations. The question is why. Looking at the latest research helps uncover what's driving progress globally, why the U.S. is falling behind, and what you can do to reduce your own risk.

Global Trends Reveal Uneven Progress in Chronic Disease Deaths

In a study published in *The Lancet*, researchers examined death rates from **chronic, non-communicable diseases** (NCDs) across 185 countries between 2001 and 2019.¹ Their goal was to measure how much progress countries made in reducing early deaths from diseases like heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and chronic respiratory illness. The study calculated the probability of dying before age 80 from these conditions, which provides a clear picture of whether people are living longer, healthier lives.

- **Most countries saw progress, but not all** — The study found that between 2010 and 2019, NCD death rates fell in about 80% of countries. That means roughly four out of five nations managed to extend lives and improve health outcomes during that time. These countries represented over 70% of the world's population, so the progress affected billions of people.
- **U.S. performance lagged behind its peers** — While most high-income western countries made noticeable progress, the U.S. experienced the smallest improvement of them all. In contrast, Denmark recorded the steepest declines in NCD deaths, showing what's possible with more effective prevention and treatment programs. For Americans, this means more years of lost life compared to neighbors in other wealthy countries, even though the U.S. spends far more on health care.

- **Circulatory diseases drove the biggest improvements** – **Heart disease** and stroke, grouped under circulatory diseases, were the top contributors to declining NCD deaths worldwide. Better treatments, earlier detection, and improved emergency care all played a role in reducing fatalities. Certain cancers also saw meaningful improvements – stomach, colorectal, cervical, breast, lung, and prostate cancers accounted for large shares of the progress.
- **Other conditions offset gains** – Not every disease trend moved in the right direction. The study showed that deaths from neuropsychiatric conditions, including severe mental health disorders, as well as pancreatic and liver cancers, actually increased in many places. These conditions acted like weights, pulling down the overall gains achieved through heart and cancer improvements.

Decade-to-Decade Comparisons Show Progress Is Slowing

One of the most concerning findings is that the rate of improvement from 2010 to 2019 was weaker than from 2001 to 2010. In fact, 60% of countries saw a slowdown or even reversal of earlier progress. That means while the world moved forward in reducing NCD deaths, the pace of progress is no longer keeping up with what was achieved in the previous decade.

- **Geographic differences tell different stories** – Countries in central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa experienced the greatest reductions in female deaths from NCDs. For men, the largest declines were in central and eastern Europe. On the other hand, Pacific Island nations had almost no progress, with death rates barely moving downward despite already having some of the highest NCD burdens worldwide.
- **Age-related differences shaped outcomes** – In some nations, both working-age adults and older adults over 65 saw reductions in deaths, producing strong overall declines. In other countries, progress in one age group was offset by worsening

outcomes in another, which canceled out broader national progress. This age divide shows how important it is to target health interventions at multiple stages of life rather than focusing only on one group.

- **Chronic disease trends reveal missed opportunities** – The rising burden of liver and pancreatic cancers points to lifestyle and environmental factors – like alcohol use, poor diet, obesity, and exposure to toxins – that remain unresolved. Neuropsychiatric disease increases suggest mental health care has not advanced at the same pace as physical health care, leaving a key gap.
- **Early death from chronic diseases is not inevitable** – Where countries invested in prevention, treatment, and healthier environments, lives were extended. But progress is fragile – when momentum slows, the burden of disease rises again.

How to Take Control of Chronic Disease Risk

You have far more power over your long-term health than most people realize. Chronic diseases are not random – they're fueled by predictable causes such as poor diet, toxic exposures, lack of movement, and unchecked stress.

By addressing the root problems, you give your cells the tools to produce steady energy, repair damage, and keep inflammation under control. Think of this section as a personal roadmap: the lessons learned from countries that successfully reduced death rates can also guide you in protecting your own long-term health.

1. **Cut out vegetable oils and hidden hormone disruptors** – Your mitochondria – the energy factories inside your cells – are poisoned by **linoleic acid** (LA), a polyunsaturated fat found in seed oils like soybean, safflower, sunflower, and canola. Even if the label says organic, these oils still drive cellular stress and accelerate disease. Replace them with stable fats like ghee, grass fed butter, or beef tallow.

At the same time, remove **plastics** and synthetic chemicals that disrupt your hormones. That means avoiding microwaving or storing food in plastic, and swapping personal care products that contain phthalates or BPA. When you lower these daily stressors, your body stops running on overload and begins to heal.

2. Rebuild your gut barrier with healthy food choices — Your gut is the frontline shield against toxins and inflammation. If your digestion is already fragile, loading up on raw vegetables or fiber-heavy foods will only make you feel worse. Start with carbs that are easy to digest, like whole fruits and white rice.

As your gut recovers, add root vegetables before gradually introducing additional vegetables, legumes, and well-tolerated whole grains. Fermented foods like kefir or sauerkraut also help support balance once you tolerate them. Think of this as a gradual training program for your microbiome, not a sprint.

3. Limit your electromagnetic field (EMF) exposure where it matters most — Your body heals and recharges while you sleep, but that repair process is disrupted if you're surrounded by constant **wireless signals**. Turn off your Wi-Fi at night, keep your phone on airplane mode when you aren't using it, and avoid placing electronics near your bed. These simple changes give your nervous system the downtime it needs, reducing stress and restoring balance.

4. Clear out daily toxins in your food, water, and home — The chemicals you eat, drink, and breathe build up in your body every day. Filter your water to remove heavy metals, fluoride, and industrial pollutants. Choose foods that are minimally packaged and avoid heating anything in plastic. In your home, ditch conventional cleaning sprays and artificial fragrances for simple, natural alternatives. When you lower this toxic load, your body's detox systems free up energy for healing and disease prevention.

5. Support your energy system with sun, movement, sleep, and niacinamide — Your cells need a steady **rhythm of light**, activity, and rest to stay strong. Get **sunlight** daily — but to protect your skin, avoid midday exposure until you've eliminated

vegetable oils for at least six months. This not only boosts vitamin D but also helps your mitochondria create energy. Walk often, add some resistance training, and move your body every day – you don't need to be an athlete, just consistent.

Protect your sleep as much as you protect your diet. And consider [niacinamide](#), a simple B vitamin, at 50 milligrams three times a day. It helps your mitochondria clear out the backlog of unused fuel, restoring clean energy production. This step is inexpensive, safe, and one of the fastest ways to get your system running smoothly again.

FAQs About Chronic Disease

Q: Why are global death rates from chronic diseases declining while the U.S. is falling behind?

A: Most countries made strong progress between 2010 and 2019, especially by reducing deaths from heart disease and certain cancers. The U.S., however, saw the smallest improvement of all high-income nations, meaning Americans are losing more years of life despite record health care spending.

Q: Which diseases are driving the biggest improvements worldwide?

A: Circulatory diseases like heart disease and stroke were the largest contributors to progress, thanks to better treatments, early detection, and improved emergency care. Some cancers, including stomach, colorectal, breast, cervical, prostate, and lung cancer, also showed meaningful declines.

Q: What conditions are getting worse instead of better?

A: Deaths from pancreatic cancer, liver cancer, and neuropsychiatric conditions such as severe mental health disorders increased in many countries, offsetting some of the gains made against heart disease and other cancers.

Q: What everyday factors raise my risk for chronic disease?

A: Hidden toxins like seed oils, plastics, and hormone disruptors push your cells into constant stress. Poor gut health, excessive exposure to wireless radiation (EMFs), lack of movement, chronic stress, and poor sleep all contribute to inflammation and early death.

Q: What steps can I take right now to protect my health?

A: Cut seed oils and endocrine disruptors from your diet and home, rebuild your gut barrier with foods that match your digestive health, reduce EMF exposure, filter your water and remove toxic household products, and support your energy system with sun exposure, daily movement, quality sleep, and low-dose niacinamide. These actions directly strengthen your body's defenses against chronic disease.

Sources and References

- ¹ [The Lancet September 20, 2025, Volume 406, Issue 10509, Pages 1255-1282](#)