



Alaska: Burden of Chronic Diseases



The Burden of Chronic Diseases

Chronic diseases – such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes – are among the most prevalent, costly, and preventable of all health problems. Leading a healthy lifestyle (avoiding tobacco use, being physically active, and eating well) greatly reduces a person’s risk for developing chronic disease. Access to high-quality and affordable prevention measures (including screening and appropriate follow-up) are essential steps in saving lives, reducing disability and lowering costs for medical care.

Heart Disease and Stroke

Heart disease and stroke, the first and third leading causes of death in the United States, are the most common cardiovascular diseases.

- Heart disease accounted for 20% of deaths in Alaska in 2005, while stroke caused 6% of deaths.
- In 2007, 25% of adults in Alaska reported having high blood pressure (hypertension) and 38% of those screened reported having high blood cholesterol, which puts them at greater risk for developing heart disease and stroke.

Cancer

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States, accounting for almost one in every four deaths.

- 23% of all deaths in Alaska in 2005 were due to cancer.
- The American Cancer Society estimates that 2,500 new cases of cancer were diagnosed in Alaska in 2007, including 270 new cases of colorectal cancer and 340 new cases of breast cancer in women.

Diabetes

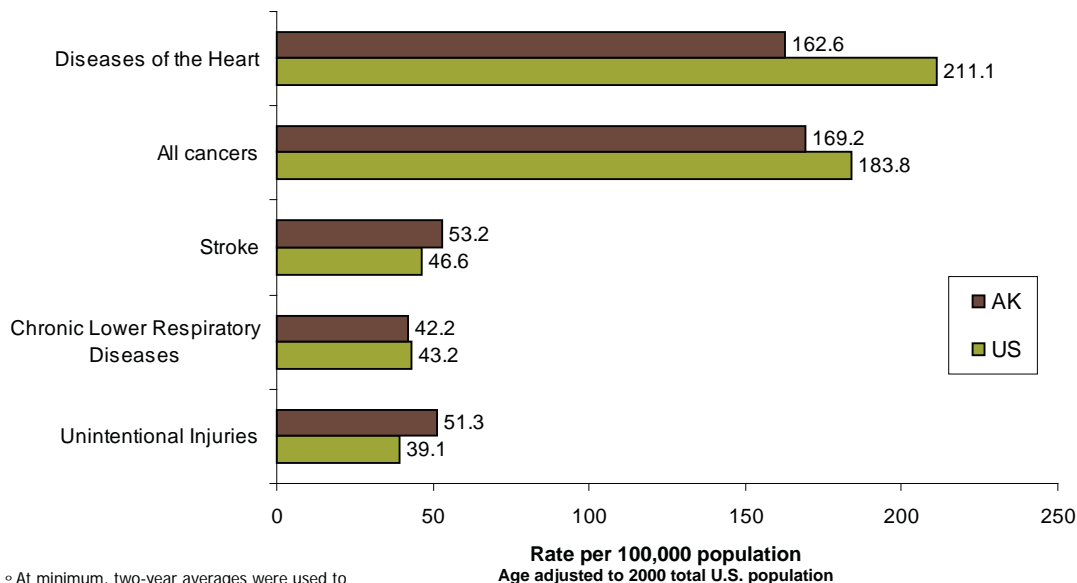
In 2005, diabetes was the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S. Likely to be underreported as a cause of death, the risk of death among people with diabetes is about twice that of people without diabetes of similar age.

- 93 adults in Alaska died from diabetes mellitus in 2005.
- In 2007, 7% of adults in Alaska reported being diagnosed with non-pregnancy related diabetes.^o

Arthritis

- Arthritis is the most common cause of disability in the U.S., affecting more than 46 million Americans.
- In 2007, 25% of adults in Alaska reported being diagnosed with arthritis.

5 Most Common Causes of Death, Alaska Compared with United States, 2005



Alaska: Risk Factors and Preventive Services

Tobacco Use

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in the United States. Each year, an estimated 438,000 people in the U.S. die prematurely from smoking or exposure to second hand smoke, and another 8.6 million have a serious illness caused by smoking. For every person who dies from smoking, 20 million people suffer from at least one serious tobacco-related illness.

- In 2007, 22% of adults and 18% of high school students in Alaska reported being current smokers.

Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Overweight/Obesity

In the past 30 years, the prevalence of overweight and obesity has increased sharply for both adults and children. Physical inactivity and unhealthy eating contribute to overweight and obesity and a number of chronic diseases, including some cancers, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes.

- In 2007, 65% of adults in Alaska were overweight or obese and 16% of high schools students were overweight, based on self-reported height and weight.
- 84% of high school students and 76% of adults in Alaska consumed fewer than 5 fruits and vegetables per day.
- 53% of Alaska high school students did not attend physical education classes.
- 39% of adults in Alaska were not engaged in sufficient moderate or vigorous physical activity.

Early Detection

Mammography is a screening method that has been shown to reduce mortality due to breast cancer by approximately 20-25% over 10 years among woman aged 40 years and over.

- In 2006, 27% of women in Alaska aged 40 years or older, reported not having had a mammogram within the last 2 years.

Up to 60 percent of deaths from colorectal cancer could be prevented if persons aged 50 and older were screened regularly. Colorectal cancer can be prevented by removing precancerous polyps or abnormal growths, which can be identified during a fecal occult blood test, sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy.

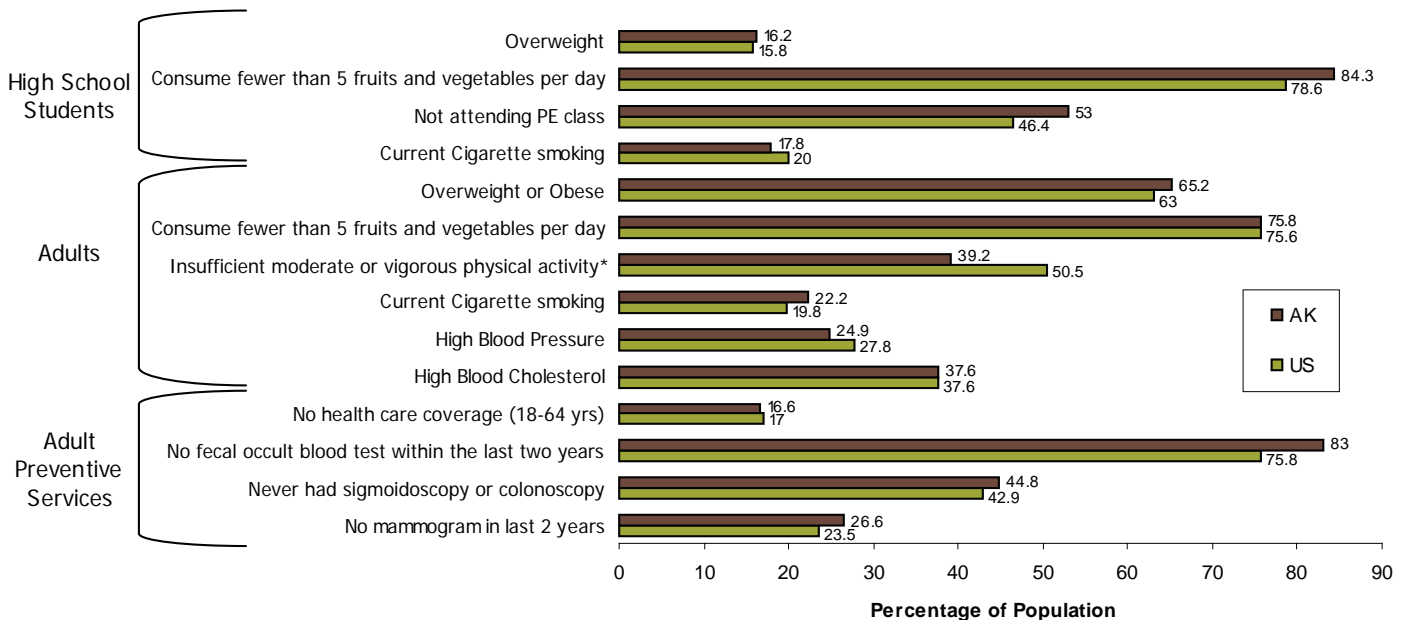
- In 2006, among adults in Alaska aged 50 years or older, 45% reported never having had a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy.
- 83% reported not having had a fecal occult blood test within the past two years.

No Health Care Coverage

With the U.S. health care system changing rapidly, health care plans (e.g. health insurance, HMOs and Medicaid/Medicare) need to ensure that all Americans have access to affordable, high-quality preventive services.

- In 2007, 17% of adults aged 18-64 in Alaska reported having no health care coverage.

Preventive Services and Risk Factors, Alaska Compared with United States



* Moderate or vigorous physical activity is defined as "Adults with 30+ minutes of moderate physical activity five or more days per week, or vigorous physical activity for 20+ minutes three or more days per week."

^ Statistics presented are from the most recent year available