

The common cold may be with us forever, but we can guard against the deadliest diseases among us right now.

Practicing preventative measures increases the odds of avoiding these killers, and that's better than pinning hopes on white-smocked scientists in beaker-laden laboratories finding cures.

"A lot of people don't really understand how powerful preventative measures can be. But we do," said Frank "Mac" Maguire, M.D., senior vice president of health care services at TriWest Healthcare Alliance, Tricare's West Region contractor.

TriWest has an entire department called Population Health Improvement that administers educational disease management programs encouraging self-management skills and improved collaboration with health-care providers to tackle these killer diseases. It's part of Tricare's focus on disease prevention for servicemembers and their families.

Tricare is your preventative weapon of choice when hitting the microscopic beachheads of disease. Clinical preventative services are a critical component of the Tricare program and include colorectal cancer exams, colonoscopy, mammograms, prostate cancer exams, skin cancer exams, testicular cancer exams, and thyroid cancer exams.

Another preventative weapon is your genetic history. "Knowing your family and personal health history can help identify your risk factors for getting some of these diseases and the benefit of screening for them earlier," said Kathleen Sobera, TriWest's director of Population Health Improvement. "With early detection, many of these killers can be eliminated or minimized as threats."

Use these preventative recommendations from TriWest and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to keep these top-five killers at bay:

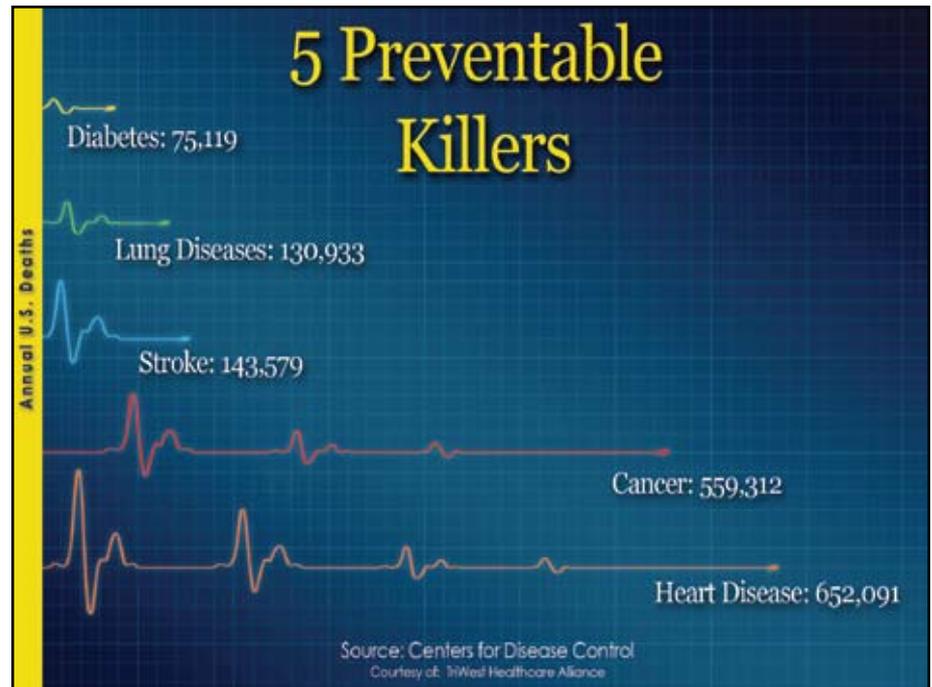
No. 1: Heart Disease

Men tend to develop heart disease sooner than women, and it can cut them down in the prime of life. About 25 percent of heart-disease-related deaths happen to men between the ages of 35 and 65—10 to 15 years sooner than for women. Reduce the risk of heart disease and its deadly partner, coronary artery disease, by treating

Top Killers You Can Neutralize

Why wait for cures? Here are some ways you can keep the deadliest diseases at bay.

By Richard Gray



conditions that contribute to them, notably high cholesterol, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

"There are simple things you can do to protect yourself," Dr. Maguire said, including the following:

- Don't smoke or use other tobacco products.
- Eat a varied diet rich in fruits and vegetables, and avoid high-fat foods.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week.
- Have your cholesterol tested.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar under control.
- Get regular blood pressure checks.
- Take a daily dose of aspirin, if your doctor OKs it.

No. 2: Cancer

Cancer in various forms is the second deadliest killer, and lung cancer is the most common cause of death for both men and women, according to the CDC.

Not surprisingly, the best defensive measures against cancer are much like those for heart disease:

- Don't smoke or use other tobacco products.
- Eat a varied diet rich in fruits and vegetables, and avoid high-fat foods.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week.
- Limit your exposure to sun, and use sunscreen.
- Drink alcohol only in moderation, if at all.
- Be aware of potential cancer-causing substances (carcinogens) in your home and workplace, and take steps to reduce your exposure to these substances.
- Have regular health screenings, such as mammograms, cervical cancer screening, colonoscopies, prostate exams, and blood tests.
- Learn your family medical history and review it with your doctor.

No. 3: Stroke

The third-most-effective killer, stroke, can paralyze even if it doesn't kill, and although it strikes equally at men and women, men have a better chance of surviving.

Some risk factors are beyond control, such as family history, age, and race, but the leading cause—high blood pressure—certainly can be controlled.

Other preventative measures for strokes include the following:

- Lower your intake of cholesterol and saturated fat, and get your cholesterol checked.
- Get regular blood pressure checks, and if it's higher than normal, control it.
- Don't smoke.
- Control diabetes.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week.
- Manage stress.
- Limit alcohol consumption.
- Talk with your doctor about taking a daily dose of aspirin.

No. 4: Lung Diseases

Sometimes associated with lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is fourth on the deadly list. It's a group of chronic lung conditions that include emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Men who smoke are 12 times more likely to develop COPD than men who have never smoked.

Here are some other preventative measures:

- Don't smoke.
- Avoid second-hand smoke.
- Minimize exposure to workplace chemicals.

No. 5: Diabetes

Diabetes affects the way the body uses blood sugar (glucose). Excess body fat is an important preventable risk factor, and 80 percent of people with diabetes are overweight.

The CDC estimates that one-third of men with the most common form of diabetes don't know they have it until they develop complications, such as impotence, nerve damage, vision loss, or kidney disease.

Prevention includes these measures:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat a varied diet, rich in fruits, vegetables, and low-fat foods.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week.
- Get your fasting blood sugar level checked periodically.
- Know your family's diabetes history and discuss it with your doctor.

"Many of these preventative mea-

asures have the same things in common," Dr. Maguire said. "So what's important is to change any habits that are harmful and to embrace new, healthy choices. It takes about two months to change a lifelong habit. But when you do, you'll stay healthier and live longer."

Mr. Gray is an Army veteran and an editor for TriWest Healthcare Alliance, an ROA STARs partner.

Slimmin' Down

DeCA offers 10 tips to help you lose weight.

By MAJ Karen E. Fauber, USAR

Now that summer is here and you're heading off to the beach for some R&R or taking that cruise you've always wanted, there's no time like the present to lose that extra weight. Tennis shoes in one hand and water bottle in the other, you're going to lose those five, 10, or more pounds this time, right? Well, to help you reach your individual weight loss goal, the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) offers these tips to melt away the pounds.

1. Be real. Set a realistic goal for weight loss and write it down. Losing two to no more than three pounds a week is generally recommended by the experts. Remember how long it took to gain the weight? Give yourself time to lose it gradually and you are more likely to keep it off as you change your lifestyle habits.

2. Feel the burn. Calories in, calories out, or what you eat is what you get. That means stay active. Go walking, swimming, jogging, bicycling, or dancing to burn those calories. The key is to make physical activity a part of your everyday life.

3. Go small. Use the small plate and small bowl at meals instead of the large ones. It is too easy to eat too much when you use a big dinner plate or a large bowl, especially for that nighttime ice cream.

4. Eat fiber. Aim for 25 to 35 grams of fiber a day. Fiber fills you up, helping you feel full for a long time between meals. Easy ways to get more fiber include eating cereal for breakfast that has 10 or more grams per serving, eating a pear or an apple for a snack, adding beans to your meals, soups, and salads, and adding a few nuts as a snack or on a salad.

5. Got protein? Do not skimp on protein, found in such foods as chicken, fish, turkey, lean beef, and pork. It's also in dairy foods, such as skim milk, yogurt, and low fat cheeses, beans, and nuts. The average person needs .8 grams protein per kilogram body weight, about 60 to 90 grams protein a day.

6. Is that plate big enough? Portion control, portion control, portion control. A serving that is bigger than your fist is probably too much to eat—unless it's vegetables.

7. Mama said, "Eat your veggies!" And mama was right. Eat vegetables at lunch and dinner. Portion sizes are not so important here. In fact, eating vegetables is a good place to cheat if you need to. Make sure to fill up half your plate at meals with vegetables. The fiber, water content, and nutrients in vegetables help the body lose weight. Fresh, canned, or frozen veggies are all great choices. Avoid the sauces, though, as they add many extra calories.

8. Don't forget the fruit. Fresh, canned, or frozen: they all make great snacks and a nice desert. Dried fruit is OK, too, as long as you control the portion sizes.

9. "I get by with a little help from my friends." Get support from your family and friends to stay on track with your weight loss. How about creating your own biggest losers contest and invite others to join? Support goes a long way with weight loss.

10. Celebrate your progress. Give yourself a pat on the back and more as you continue to lose weight. It's no easy task. As you reach a weight loss goal, how about something special to reward yourself? Make it something that you really can enjoy, like a new outfit, season tickets for your favorite sport, a special vacation. You decide what it is and write it down with your goal.

MAJ Fauber is a dietitian with DeCA, which operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees, and their families.

ON THE WEB: For more information on weight loss or nutrition topics, go to the DeCA Dietitian Web page at www.commissaries.com.