

Health

Try preventive treatments

50pct of mid-aged Americans think will develop 'dementia'

NEW YORK, Dec 3, (RTRS): Roughly half of middle-aged Americans believe they're "somewhat" or "very likely" to develop dementia, a survey suggests, and many try to beat the odds with supplements like ginkgo biloba and vitamin E that aren't proven to help.

Researchers examined data from the University of Michigan's 2018 National Poll on Healthy Aging (NPHA), a nationally-representative survey of adults ages 50 to 80. Overall, 44.3% of respondents said they were at least somewhat likely to develop dementia, and 4.2% said they were very likely to develop dementia.

Just 5.2% of survey participants said they had discussed dementia prevention with their doctor, the study also found.

Nonetheless, 31.6% said they took fish oil or omega-3 fatty acids to help lower their risk, and 39.2% took other vitamins or supplements. More than half of participants also believed doing crossword puzzles could help stave off dementia.

"Given repeated failures of disease-preventing or disease-modifying treatments for dementia, interest in treatment and prevention have shifted earlier in the disease process," study leader Dr Donovan Maust of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and colleagues write in JAMA Neurology.

Ineffective

The authors point out that overestimating one's own risk combined with an embrace of ineffective preventive measures could lead to a lot of wasted spending, even if effective preventive treatments are discovered one day.

"Adults in middle age may not accurately estimate their risk of developing dementia, which could lead to both overuse and underuse if preclinical dementia treatments become available," Maust and colleagues write.

About 1.6% of the US population had Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia as of 2014, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. By 2060, this will more than double to 3.3% of the population.

Advancing age is the biggest risk factor for dementia, along with family history, being African-American or Hispanic, or having poor cardiovascular health or a traumatic brain injury, according to the CDC.

Normal age-related memory changes can include things like occasionally losing car keys or forgetting the name of an acquaintance, but this might not necessarily lead to dementia. With dementia, people might use unusual words to refer to familiar objects or forget the name of a close friend or loved one.

In the current study, black respondents were 49% less likely than white people to believe they might develop dementia.

And compared to people who rated their physical health as excellent, respondents who rated it as good were 49% more likely to think they might develop dementia and those who rated their health fair or poor were 46% more likely to think they might develop dementia.

Compared to people who rated

their mental health as excellent, those who rated it as fair or poor were 2.5 times more likely to think they might develop dementia.

People were more likely to speak to their doctor about dementia if they thought they had a higher likelihood of developing it, the study also found.

The researchers lacked data on whether people actually had signs or symptoms of dementia, or medical records to indicate whether they had any chronic health conditions that might increase their risk.

"While managing chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease, could reduce dementia risk, few respondents appear to have discussed this with their physician," the study team writes. "Physicians should emphasize current evidence-based strategies of managing lifestyle and chronic medical conditions to reduce the risk of dementia."



Suicide: Firearms are by far the most lethal suicide method, with nearly nine out of 10 attempts being fatal, a new study finds.

Pinpointing the most lethal method can help experts find ways to cut down on suicides, researchers noted in Annals of Internal Medicine.

"A lot of the disparities we see in suicide rates - higher rates in males, older people and rural areas - can be explained by the type of methods people use," said lead author Andrew Conner, a medical student at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut. "Certainly, the use of a firearm in a suicide attempt makes the likelihood of death higher than any other method."

Cause

In 2017, suicide was the 10th leading cause of death in the US, Conner and his colleagues noted, adding that the overall fatality rate for suicide attempts nationwide is one in 12.

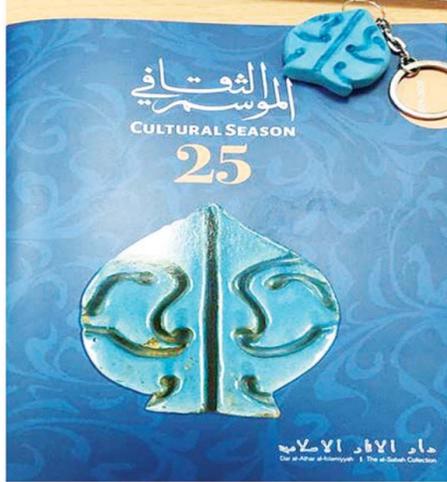
To take a closer look at the epidemiology of suicide in America, Conner's team turned to three databases: the Nationwide Emergency Department Sample (NEDS), the National Inpatient Sample (NIS) and the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS).

Between 2007 and 2014, there were 3,657,886 suicide attempts, with 309,377 deaths resulting from those attempts.

Overall, 8.5% of suicide attempts resulted in death, with 14.7% of attempts resulting in death in males versus 3.3% in females and 3.4% in people aged 15 to 24 years versus 35.4% in those aged 65 and older. Drug poisoning accounted for 59.4% of suicide attempts but only 13.5% of deaths, while firearms and hanging accounted for 8.8% of attempts, but 75.3% of deaths. Firearms were the most lethal method with 89.6% of attempts with firearms resulting in death, followed by drowning at 56.4% and hanging at 52.7%.

Suicide attempts are often impulsive, said Dr Paul Nestadt, an assistant professor of psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, Maryland. And if you can block that impulse, you may save a life, Nestadt added.

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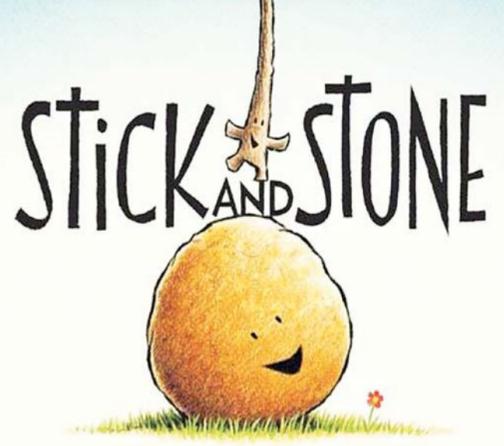
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A flyer of the event

Prediabetics at higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes

'Prediabetes' common in US teens, youths

4.5m Yemenis suffer from disabilities: WHO

'Yemen's disabled neglected and suffering'

NEW YORK, Dec 3, (RTRS): About one in five teens and one in four young adults in the US have slightly elevated blood sugar, sometimes known as "prediabetes," that can lead to full-blown diabetes, a study suggests.

For the study, researchers examined data on blood sugar levels for 5,786 people ages 12 to 34 who hadn't been diagnosed with diabetes. Overall, 18% of the younger people in the study, ranging in age from 12 to 18 years old, had "prediabetes," as did 24% of the adults 19 to 34 years old.

"Prediabetes is highly prevalent in US adolescents and young adults, especially in male individuals and in people with obesity," lead study author Linda Andes of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta and colleagues write in JAMA Pediatrics.

These teens and young adults with prediabetes are at increased risk not only for developing type 2 diabetes - the common form of the disease associated with obesity and aging - but also cardiovascular problems that can lead to heart attacks and strokes, the study team writes.

"These findings together with the observed increase in the prevalence of type 2 diabetes in US adolescents and in diabetes-related complications in young adults highlight the need for ... prevention efforts tailored to the young segment of the US population," the study team notes.

Signal

Average blood sugar levels over the course of about three months can be estimated by measuring a form of hemoglobin that binds to glucose in blood, known as A1c. Hemoglobin A1c levels of 6.5% or above signal diabetes.

Levels between 5.7% and 6.4% are considered elevated, though not yet diabetic, while 5.7% or less is considered normal.

Overall, 5.3% of teens and 8% of young adults in the study had levels in this "prediabetic" range, the study found.

To get a more complete picture of how many young people might be at risk for developing full-blown diabe-

CAIRO, Dec 3, (AP): Yemen's civil war has exacted an enormous toll on people with disabilities, who find themselves on the margins of society and excluded from badly needed humanitarian assistance, Amnesty International said in a report released Tuesday.

The 50-page report by the London-based global rights group shines a light on the inadequate or nonexistent support for disabled Yemenis - a population "most at risk and most marginalized" in the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

"We understand of course the extent of which the humanitarian response in Yemen has been overstretched," said Rawya Rageh, Senior Crisis Advisor at Amnesty International. "But this is not just about access to funds. What we are calling for is a change in perspective, a change in approach, that the rights of people with disabilities are addressed at the outset of the crisis."

In a war that has killed over 100,000 people, the number of wounded and disabled Yemenis is soaring as well, overwhelming health care facilities. Although verifying data is extremely difficult in the country,

the World Health Organization estimates at least 4.5 million Yemenis suffer from disabilities, or 15% of the population.

The Amnesty report, citing nearly a hundred interviews with disabled people, government officials and aid workers, catalogues a daunting range of challenges that force disabled Yemenis to resort to desperate measures to survive.

The research focuses on government-controlled areas in the country's south, as the Iran-allied Houthis rebels, who seized northern Yemen in 2014 and have been fighting the Saudi-led coalition, which backs Yemen's internationally recognized government, for control of the country, refused to grant the group access.

Not only do disabled people live in a society that treats them as outcasts, Amnesty said, citing numerous cases of discrimination, but overburdened humanitarian organizations exclude them from proper access to aid.

Refugee camps lack accessible toilets, let alone wheelchairs, canes or devices like prosthetic limbs, confining disabled people to tents. Handicapped people described crawling to

toilets and making laborious treks to faraway food distribution centers.

Yemen's war has also disrupted official sources of support for those with disabilities, Amnesty said, leaving many without monthly stipends for medical expenses. Without government help, a 14-year-old boy with cerebral palsy, for instance, has had to stop treatment, worsening his condition, according to Amnesty.

Furthermore, sudden outbreaks of violence have trapped disabled people and separated them from their families, Amnesty found. Many disabled Yemenis are forced to flee their homes without wheelchairs or crutches, carried in the arms of relatives.

Jalila al-Saleh Ali recounted to Amnesty how she abandoned her mentally ill husband at home while sprinting away from gunfire in the city of Taiz, holding her 16-year-old handicapped son.

As the war in the Arab world's poorest country grinds on, international donors must "do better to ensure these barriers that people with disabilities are facing are eliminated," urged Rageh. "People with disabilities cannot continue to be left behind."

pressure and more fat stored around their midsections than individuals without prediabetes.

Among teens in the study, about 23% of males had prediabetes, compared with 13% of females. Differences persisted among young adults: 29% of males and 19% of females had prediabetes.

And, less than 16% of white teens had prediabetes, compared with more than 22% of black and Hispanic adolescents. This difference also carried through to early adulthood: about 21% of white people had prediabetes com-

pared with 27% of black individuals and 29% of Hispanic young adults.

People with obesity were also most likely to have prediabetes: 26% of teens and 37% of young adults with obesity had this condition.

The study wasn't a controlled experiment designed to prove whether or how markers of prediabetes might directly lead to diabetes in teens or young adults.

One limitation of the study is that researchers only had data to assess prediabetes at a single point in time, the study authors note.

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