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The Global Burden of Disease Study commenced in 1990 as a World Bank-commissioned that measured the health impact of disease and injuries. It introduced the term disability-adjusted life year (DALY) as a new measure to quantify the burden of diseases and injuries.¹

It is managed by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington with the purpose “understanding the current state of population health and the strategies necessary to improve it.”

It does this by addressing the following questions.

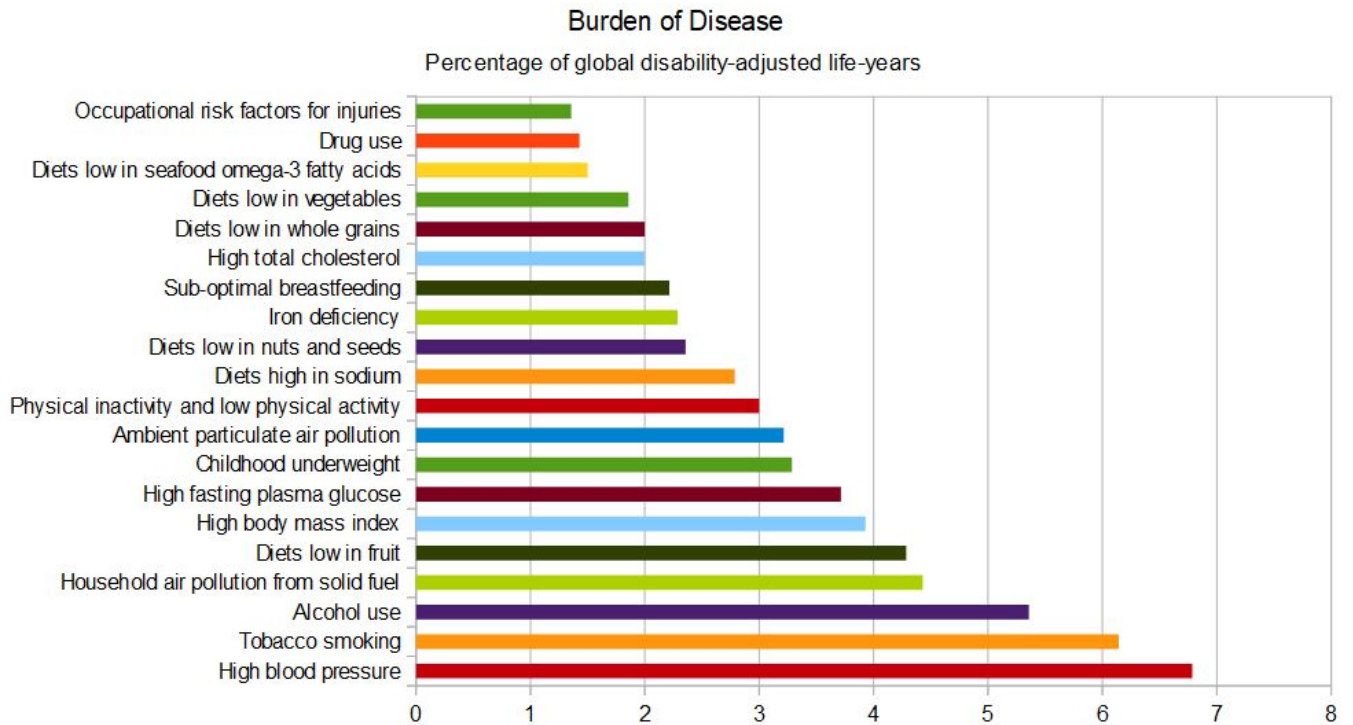
- What are the world’s major health problems?
- How well is society addressing these problems?
- How do we best dedicate resources to maximize health improvement?

The 2010 report, *A comparative risk assessment of burden of disease and injury attributable to 67 risk factors and risk factor clusters in 21 regions, 1990-2010*, provided the following information.^{2 3}

The report was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The above paper has 207 contributors listed.

Millions of lives are lost each year or people are living the consequences of poor dietary choices which can be easily averted by changing what we eat.

The twenty most significant factors are shown below.



A number of these risk factors are attributable, either directly or indirectly, to diet.

Overall Rank	Dietary Rank	Criteria
1	*	High blood pressure
5	1	Diets low in fruit
6	*	High body mass index
7	*	High fasting plasma glucose
11	2	Diets high in sodium
12	3	Diets low in nuts and seeds
13	*	Iron deficiency
16	4	Diets low in whole grains
17	5	Diets low in vegetables
22	6	High processed meat
24	7	Low fiber
31	8	Low zinc

Sodium is greatly increased in animal-based diets and diets high in processed food. Even more important than sodium is the sodium/potassium ratio. Plant-based diets are low in sodium and high in potassium.

The survey in 1990 showed *Sanitation* ranked at 15. It is now ranked 26 and *Unimproved water* has been reduced from rank 33 to 22.

Related articles

[DASH Diet and Blood Pressure](#)

Footnotes

1. Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (2019) Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation - About [online]. Available from: www.healthdata.org/about (Accessed 19 May 2020).
2. Lim, S. (2012) A comparative risk assessment of burden of disease and injury attributable to 67 risk factors and risk factor clusters in 21 regions, 1990-2010. *Lancet*. 380 (9859), 2224-2260.
3. Anon (2019) *Lancet -Global Burden of Disease* [online]. Available from: www.thelancet.com/gbd (Accessed 27 April 2019).