

Four lifestyle choices may help reduce risk of chronic disease, researchers say.

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (8/11, Yurkiewicz) reports, "If people would just do four things -- engage in regular physical activity, eat a healthy diet, not smoke, and avoid becoming obese -- they could slash their risk of diabetes, heart attack, stroke or cancer by 80 percent," CDC researchers found. "But less than 10 percent of the 23,153 people in the multiyear study -- published in Monday's Archives of Internal Medicine -- actually lived their lives this way." The new [study](#), however, may change some minds, because it has "such a simple straightforward focus on making the point that prevention works in preventing serious disease," noted Dr. J. Leonard Lichtenfeld, of the American Cancer Society.

Delving into the specifics of the study, [HealthDay](#) (8/10, Mozes) reported that CDC investigators, alongside scientists in Germany, "drew on data from a German study conducted between 1994 and 1998" in which participants between 35 and 65 years of age were asked about their "lifestyle characteristics," disease history, and dietary habits. "Adherence to four key lifestyle indicators were tracked: never having smoked; having a body-mass index below 30 (the threshold for obesity); exercising for a minimum of 3.5 hours per week; and eating healthfully, as evidenced by a diet high in fruit and vegetable intake, but low in meat." Although "most study participants engaged in some (one to three), but not all of the ideal behaviors," the team found that "less than four percent met none of the criteria for a healthy lifestyle, while nine percent followed all four."

As for disease incidence, "3.7 percent of participants developed diabetes, 0.9 percent developed myocardial infarction, 0.8 percent developed stroke, and 3.8 percent developed cancer," [MedPage Today](#) (8/10, Fiore) reported. Yet, participants "who followed all four lifestyle factors had a 78 percent lower risk of developing a chronic disease than those with no healthy factors." Specifically, they had a "93 percent lower risk of diabetes, an 81 percent lower risk of myocardial infarction, a 50 percent lower risk of stroke," and a "36 percent lower risk of cancer." And, "reductions in risk were similar for men and women."

In light of their work, the "researchers say it's important to adopt and teach healthy habits early in life," [WebMD](#) (8/10, Stacy) reported. The UK's [Telegraph](#) (8/11, Devlin) also covers the story, as did [Time](#) (8/10, Blue) in its Wellness blog