

## 50 facts from the World Health Report 1995

### General

1. ■ The world's population has more than doubled from 2.5 billion in 1950 to 5.6 billion today, including 4.4 billion in the developing world.
2. ■ More than one-fifth of the global population lives in extreme poverty.
3. ■ Life expectancy in one of the world's least developed countries is 43 years, compared to 78 years in one of the world's most developed countries.
4. ■ Despite gains in overall life expectancy worldwide – a rise of 4 years to 65 years since 1980 – at least five countries will see their life expectancy rates drop in the next five years.
5. ■ Half the world's population still lacks regular access to treatment of common diseases and to the most needed essential drugs.

### Children

6. ■ More than 12 million children under 5 years of age die in the developing world every year, most from a combination of preventable causes.
7. ■ Each year more than 4 million children under 5 years die of acute respiratory infections, particularly pneumonia. This is equal to one death every 8 seconds.
8. ■ Diarrhoeal diseases kill about 3 million children a year.
9. ■ Measles kills about 1.2 million children a year.
10. ■ Malaria kills about 1 million children a year.
11. ■ More than half a million babies die each year from neonatal tetanus.
12. ■ Up to 320 out of every 1000 babies do not reach their fifth birthday in some parts of the developing world, compared to only 6 deaths under 5 years per thousand births in some of the most developed countries.
13. ■ More than 200 million children – almost a third of all the children in the world – are undernourished.
14. ■ Breast-feeding could prevent the deaths of at least 1 million children a year.

15. ■ It is estimated that by the year 2000, over 5 million children will be infected by HIV and another 5-10 million orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
16. ■ Globally, infant mortality has fallen by 25 per cent since 1980, from 82 per 1000 births to 62 per 1000, while deaths among children under 5 have fallen from 115 per 1000 births in 1980 to 87 per 1000 births today.
17. ■ The number of children under 5 dying from vaccine-preventable diseases – diphtheria, measles, neonatal tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough) and tuberculosis – dropped from 3.7 million in 1985 to 2.4 million in 1993. Eight out of 10 children in the world have been vaccinated against these diseases.

### Adolescents

18. ■ Pregnancy in adolescence carries a high risk of death or long-term complications. Maternal mortality rates at ages 15 to 19 are double the rates at 20 to 24, and the rates at ages 10 to 14 are 5 times higher in some countries.
19. ■ Compared to other age groups, sexually transmitted diseases are most common in young people aged 15 to 24.
20. ■ Studies in Latin America and the Caribbean show that 30–60 per cent of marriages take place in adolescence.
21. ■ One smoker in two will eventually die because of a cigarette habit begun in adolescence.
22. ■ Suicide rates among young people are rising more rapidly worldwide than in all other age groups. For every successful suicide in the developed world, some 40 adolescents attempt to kill themselves.

### Adults

23. ■ Of the world's 51 million deaths last year, 40 per cent were caused by communicable diseases.
24. ■ Infectious diseases and parasites are the world's biggest group of killers, claiming 16.4 million lives each year.

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25. ■ Diseases of the circulatory system kill 10 million people each year, and are the largest cause of death.
26. ■ Cancer claims 6 million lives each year, including 1 million due to cancer of the lungs and airways. Worldwide lung cancer is the biggest single cause of cancer deaths in men.
27. ■ Breast cancer is the main cause of cancer deaths among women in developed countries and the second cause in the developing world after cervical cancer.
28. ■ The majority of cancer victims live in the developing world and two-thirds of future cancer cases over the next 25 years will occur there.
29. ■ Overall smoking kills 6 people a minute. Smoking is the world's largest single preventable cause of illness and death. It already kills 3 million people a year and is expected to kill 10 million by the year 2020.
30. ■ Ninety-nine per cent of deaths from communicable diseases and from maternal, perinatal and neonatal causes occur in the developing world.
31. ■ A pregnant woman in Africa is 13.5 times more likely to die in childbirth than one in Europe, while the mothers of more than half of the babies born in the least developed countries have no prenatal care.
32. ■ Twenty million women undergo unsafe abortions each year and 70,000 die as a result.
33. ■ More than half of the world's women now use a contraceptive method compared to fewer than 10 per cent in 1960.
34. ■ More than 7000 adults die each day from tuberculosis, and there are over 1000 new cases every hour of every day.
35. ■ Hepatitis B kills about 1 million people each year, but it is preventable by vaccine.
36. ■ Over 13 million adults, mainly heterosexual men and women, are infected with HIV. Up to 60 per cent of infections in females are believed to occur by the age of 20. Some 6000 people become infected each day. By the year 2000 the cumulative total of HIV infections worldwide could reach 30 to 40 million.
37. ■ In the next 5 years, AIDS will have killed more than 8 million people, most of them young adults, with women an increasing proportion of the total.
38. ■ In the developing world, 1 in 2 deaths is caused by communicable disease, whereas in the developed world 3 out of 4 deaths are due to noncommunicable diseases, many of which are lifestyle-related, such as cancer or heart disease.
39. ■ Hypertension or high blood pressure, one of the major contributors to heart disease, stroke and kidney failure, affects 8 to 18 per cent of adults worldwide.
40. ■ More than 100 million people will suffer from diabetes by the end of this century – 90 per cent of them with the form strongly linked to lifestyle habits such as inappropriate diet and lack of exercise.
41. ■ Some 500 million people suffer from neurotic, stress-related and somatoform disorders, and another 200 million from mood disorders such as chronic and manic depression.
42. ■ In Africa, where 9 of 10 deaths from malaria occur, the social and economic costs of the disease have reached \$2 billion a year.
43. ■ Schistosomiasis, or snail fever, affects 200 million people in 74 countries. The cost of treatment – although only 30 cents per patient – is too expensive for widespread use in many of the most-affected countries.
44. ■ River blindness, or onchocerciasis, a parasitic disease, infects 18 million people in 34 countries in Africa and Latin America.
45. ■ Every day about 600 people die, and another 33,000 are injured because of unsafe working conditions. Worldwide, 90 per cent of workers have no access to occupational health services.

## ***Elderly***

46. ■ The number of people in the developing world aged over 65 will increase by between 200 and 400 per cent during the next 30 years.
47. ■ Studies of elderly people in many countries show a high prevalence of such chronic diseases as stroke, dementia and cancer.
48. ■ Dementia, particularly Alzheimer's disease, affects at least 22 million people globally, including one in every 5 aged over 80.
49. ■ At least 165 million people in the world, most of them elderly, are estimated to have rheumatoid arthritis.
50. ■ One in 3 women over 50 have osteoporosis – thin bone disease – and so stand a much-heightened risk of bone fractures.