FACING THE FACTS:  
THE IMPACT OF CHRONIC DISEASE IN HIGH INCOME COUNTRIES

Chronic diseases are the major cause of death and disability worldwide. In high income countries, chronic diseases are projected to account for 87% of all deaths (see below).

![Pie chart showing projected deaths by cause in high income countries, 2005]

Projected deaths by cause, all ages, high income countries, 2005

- Cardiovascular disease: 38%
- Cancer: 26%
- Other chronic diseases: 14%
- Diabetes: 3%
- Chronic respiratory disease: 6%
- Communicable, maternal and perinatal, nutritional deficiencies: 7%
- Injuries: 6%

Total projected deaths in high income countries, 2005 = 8,140,000

Total projected chronic disease-related deaths in high income countries, 2005 = 7,127,000

WHO projects that in high income countries, over the next 10 years:

- 76 million people will die from a chronic disease.
- Deaths from infectious diseases, maternal and perinatal conditions, and nutritional deficiencies combined will increase by 0.1%.
- Deaths from chronic diseases will increase by 11% - most markedly, deaths from diabetes will increase by 53%.

The data presented in this information sheet were estimated by WHO using standard methods to maximize cross-country comparability. They are not necessarily the official statistics of Member States.

Raised body mass index (overweight and obesity) is an important cause of chronic disease. Prevalence of overweight in high income countries is expected to increase in both men and women over the next 10 years (see below).

**Projected prevalence of overweight, high income countries, males and females aged 30 years or more, 2005 and 2015**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>Not overweight</td>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>Not overweight</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men 2005</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men 2015</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women 2005</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
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<td>Women 2015</td>
<td>55%</td>
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**Solutions**

At least 80% of premature heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes, and 40% of cancer could be prevented through healthy diet, regular physical activity and avoidance of tobacco products. Cost-effective interventions exist, and have worked in many countries: the most successful strategies have employed a range of population-wide approaches combined with interventions for individuals.

WHO estimates that in high income countries, a 2% annual reduction in chronic disease death rates over and above existing trends during the next 10 years would save 7 million lives. 2 million of these lives saved would be in people under age 70.