

5590+

The new health insight helping New Zealanders lead Healthier, Longer, Better Lives



The causes of global disease have changed significantly over the past few decades.

Until recently, it was accepted that four modifiable behaviours – physical inactivity, poor nutrition, smoking and excess alcohol – led to four major non-communicable diseases (NCDs) – cancer, diabetes, respiratory and heart disease.

Each year these NCDs are responsible for 90 per cent of deaths in New Zealand.

At AIA New Zealand, we referred to this health insight as 4490 – that is, four modifiable behavioural risk factors leading to four NCDs that caused 90 per cent of New Zealand deaths.

4490 provided the foundation for AIA New Zealand's purpose-driven focus on life, health and wellbeing. Using these insights, AIA New Zealand developed an ecosystem of products, services and partnerships designed to shift the healthcare focus away from treatment towards health promotion and prevention of NCDs, by addressing the modifiable behaviours that have the greatest impact.

“Never underestimate the importance of health prevention, and understanding your own risk factors. Look for proactive steps you can take to increase control over your own long-term health.

The way forward is continued education. At a national, local and individual level. This requires ongoing commitment and collaboration between communities, government, public and private sectors to collectively maximise the quality of life for all New Zealanders.”

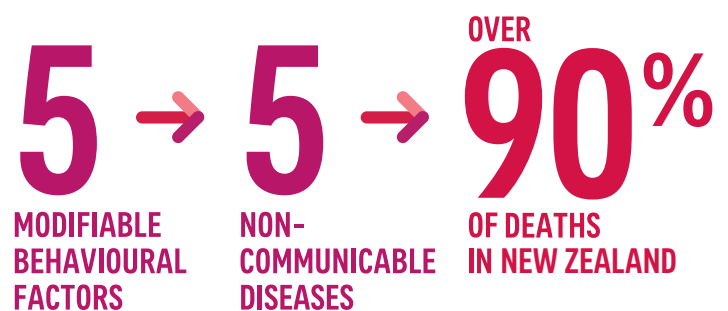
Dr John Mayhew (ONZM), AIA NZ Chief Medical Officer, former Warriors and All Blacks doctor.

The evolution of NCD insights

In keeping with the latest evidence and data on global disease, AIA New Zealand has updated 4490 to 5590+. This revision includes a fifth NCD: poor mental health, and a fifth modifiable behavioural risk factor: our interaction with the environment.

Combined with the 4490 inputs, these now lead to more than 90 per cent of deaths in New Zealand.

5590+



5 modifiable factors – physical inactivity, poor nutrition, smoking, excess alcohol and our interaction with the environment, **lead to 5 non-communicable diseases** – cancer, diabetes, respiratory disease, heart disease and poor mental health, **which are responsible for more than 90 per cent of deaths in New Zealand.**

The impact of the environment

The environment is increasingly recognised as a significant cause of disease, with research showing links between NCDs and environmental factors such as air pollution, climate change, agriculture and food and urbanisation.

Impact

There is mounting evidence that demonstrates the link between health and the environment. Our behaviours have an impact on the environment, which in turn impacts our health and wellbeing. We cannot thrive in an unhealthy environment, while the environment cannot thrive when our behaviours are unhealthy.

Concerningly, the impact of environmental factors on NCDs is escalating.

- **Air pollution** is second only to tobacco smoking in causing global NCDs. Globally, almost one-third of cardiovascular disease burden is attributable to household and ambient air pollution, second-hand tobacco smoke and exposure to toxins such as lead.
- **Climate** plays an important role in human health and wellbeing. Climate change itself can directly and indirectly increase the incidence of NCDs. For example, climate change may increase the risk of cardiovascular disease directly via air pollution and extreme temperatures, and indirectly via changes to food availability.
- **Dietary choices** also link environmental and human health. Strong evidence indicates that food production is among the largest drivers of global environmental change by contributing to climate change, biodiversity loss, freshwater use and land-system change. Rising incomes and urbanisation are driving a global dietary transition in which traditional diets are replaced by diets higher in refined sugars, refined fats, oils and meats. These dietary shifts are causing increases in diet-related diseases and environmental degradation.

There are direct and indirect links between our interaction with the environment and our mental health. These can be positive – for example, the beneficial impact of access to green space on mental health. In contrast, the effects of climate change can cause significant mental distress.

Action

To address the interplay between the environment and NCDs, both issues must be considered when designing policies and solutions. Alignment of NCD and environmental policies and programs can offer win-win opportunities for people and the

“It’s almost impossible to separate human health and the health of the broader environment. The two are inextricably linked by a whole range of environmental factors that have a direct impact on personal, physical and mental health. It’s important to make these links so that proactive steps can be taken to do something about it, whether that is contributing to climate change, or just living more healthily in response.”

Tim Jarvis AM, British-Australian environmental explorer and AIA Australia Ambassador

planet by fully integrating strategies that benefit both, such as pollution control, healthy urban design and sustainable transport.

At an individual level, every one of us can improve our impact on the environment, which in turn improves the impact of the environment on our health. For example, conserving natural resources, planting NZ native trees, being mindful of our consumption and dietary choices, reducing household waste, and choosing to use public or active transport (such as walking and cycling) when possible.

Focus on mental health

Mental wellbeing is essential for communities to thrive, yet an estimated quarter of all New Zealanders are impacted by poor mental health. Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide: this is clearly a universal concern, and it appears to be growing.

New Zealand sits in the middle of other OECD countries when comparing total population suicide rates. Our suicide rate is higher than Ireland’s or the United Kingdom’s, but lower than Australia or the United States’.

Suicide is the leading cause of death in young people however, with New Zealand youth suicide rates among the highest globally.

Impact

Mental health is impacted by a combination of diverse factors, including biological, psychological, social and environmental.

Mental health affects, and is affected by, other NCDs. Poor mental health shares several common causes and outcomes with other NCDs, and can frequently occur in the same person. For example, depression increases the risk of developing cardiovascular disease at an early age, while

cardiovascular disease increases the chance of developing depression.

Having poor mental health, alone or in combination with another NCD, increases the risk factor for suicide. It is worth noting however that suicide is not the only attributer to deaths from poor mental health. The grouping of poor mental health/ mental health conditions also includes Substance Abuse, Dementia, Alzheimer's and other mental disorders.

Action

Traditionally, efforts to combat poor mental health have primarily focused on treatment and cure late in the course of illness, rather than prevention or early intervention.

“Discussion of mental health and of what it means has never been more prominent in Aotearoa New Zealand. High rates of mental and emotional distress experienced in the community over many years have become a significant political issue.

Poor mental wellbeing is preventable. Knowing that health promotion works in the context of mental health, the challenge is now to bring this to scale within Aotearoa New Zealand and globally.”

Shaun Robinson
Chief Executive
Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand

Significant evidence supports a focus on preventive interventions that promote mental wellbeing and reduce the risk of poor mental health throughout life.

Government policies can support mental wellbeing by concentrating on mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention. This would require a shift of resources towards targeting the risk factors for poor mental health at both the individual and population level. In addition, health systems will need to be better aligned by providing mental health screening and support services.

In the last few decades, considerable research has highlighted various social and personal factors that contribute to positive emotional and mental health. Actively engaging in education or employment are at the top of the list.

At an individual level, we can all benefit from mental wellbeing check-ins, which can improve our awareness of our mental health state and encourage us to support it with healthy habits. As with other NCDs, we can modify our behaviour and incorporate small, simple changes to support our mental fitness and reduce our risk of developing poor mental health – for example, through physical activity, diet, meditation and mindfulness, social connectedness and sleep.

Latest statistics

Global

In 2019, NCDs were responsible for 42 million deaths globally, which equated to 74 per cent of the year's total deaths and seven of the top ten causes of death.

NCDs contribute not only to global deaths, but also to years lived with disability. NCDs were responsible for 1.62 billion

total years of healthy life lost to both death and disability in 2020.

By 2025, the NCD burden is expected to increase by 17 per cent.

In New Zealand

In 2019, NCDs were estimated to account for 89 per cent of all deaths in New Zealand, led by cardiovascular disease and followed by cancer.

The biggest risks contributing to death, disability and ill-health in 2019 were tobacco, high body mass index and high blood pressure.

AIA New Zealand's role

The case for investing in health promotion and prevention of NCDs is now stronger than ever. NCDs are the main cause of death and disability worldwide, and yet the main risk factors associated with them are largely preventable.

AIA New Zealand is focused on the critically important work of improving our country's health outcomes and helping New Zealanders live Healthier, Longer Better Lives.

This is underpinned by 5590+. That is, preventing the five major NCDs – cancer, diabetes, respiratory disease, heart disease and poor mental health – by improving the five modifiable factors that underpin these – physical inactivity, poor nutrition, smoking, excess alcohol and our interaction with the environment.

As a life, health and wellbeing company, AIA New Zealand has invested heavily in developing programs that support Kiwis to maintain and improve their health throughout their lives. To help people be healthier for longer and improve their overall wellbeing, AIA New Zealand has built an ecosystem of products, services and partners through five stages:



AIA Vitality

AIA Vitality is a world-leading, science-backed health and wellbeing program that is central to AIA New Zealand's focus on helping people live Healthier, Longer, Better Lives.

The program applies behavioural economic principles to educate, empower and incentivise members to understand their health and make lifestyle changes with the aim of decreasing their risk of NCDs.

By focusing on four core wellbeing pillars: physical activity (Move Well), nutrition (Eat Well), mental wellbeing (Think Well) and planning for the future (Plan Well), AIA Vitality addresses and integrates the key modifiable behaviours that are part of 5590+.

“Our dream is to champion New Zealand to be one of the healthiest and best-protected nations in the world.”

Nick Stanhope,
Chief Executive AIA New Zealand

