



## KNOW YOUR HEALTH RISKS

Personal health risk factors can be determined by your age, gender, family health history, lifestyle, and more. Some of these risk factors are within your control, such as diet and amount of exercise.

However, some risks factors can't be changed, such as your genes or ethnicity. Compared with other racial/ethnic groups, studies have shown that people who are of American Indian and Alaskan Native descent have a lower life expectancy and are disproportionately affected by many chronic conditions when compared to other ethnicities within the United States. Understanding your health risks is the first step in controlling your health journey.

**STUDIES SHOW THAT INDIVIDUALS OF AMERICAN INDIAN OR NATIVE ALASKAN DESCENT HAVE A LOWER LIFE EXPECTANCY WHEN COMPARED TO THEIR WHITE COUNTERPARTS**

## DIABETES

Diabetes is a disease in which your blood glucose, or blood sugar, levels are too high. Diabetes is a serious disease that can cause death when not addressed properly. It can cause the development of other serious disease states including heart disease. American Indians and Native Alaskans have:

- Over double the risk of being diagnosed with diabetes compared to whites (15% vs. 7%)<sup>1</sup>
- The highest death rate attributable to diabetes in the United States (52.2 per 100,000 vs. 18 per 100,000 for whites)<sup>1</sup>
- Diabetes can lead to different kinds of heart disease, peripheral artery disease,<sup>6</sup> and certain cancers, including colorectal cancer.<sup>3</sup>

### SYMPTOMS



**FREQUENT URINATION**



**INCREASED APPETITE**



**WEIGHT LOSS**



**BLURRED VISION**



**EXCESSIVE THIRST**

## VASCULAR DISEASE

Vascular disease occurs when something impedes the flow of blood through the body's network of arteries and veins (heart, legs, arms, etc). These can be a result of blockages caused by narrowed vessel walls, clots or pressure built up within the vessel. American Indians and Native Alaskans have:

- Nearly double the prevalence of coronary artery disease as the general population.<sup>1</sup>
- Twice the likelihood to suffer a stroke compared to whites of a similar age.<sup>7</sup>
- The highest rates of peripheral artery disease in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

### CORONARY SYMPTOMS



**CHEST PAIN OR PRESSURE**



**FATIGUE**



**SHORTNESS OF BREATH**



**SUDDEN PROFUSE SWEATING**

### PERIPHERAL SYMPTOMS



**POOR WOUND HEALING**



**COLD LEGS**



**LEG PAIN DURING EXERCISE, TINGLING/PAIN AT REST**



## CANCER

Cancer develops when there is an uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells and the body's ability to manage that growth fails. These clusters of cells continue to multiply resulting in the development of a tumor. Cancer is not defined as 'one disease' as there are many different types affecting different parts of the body.

- Colon cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer death for American Indian men and women.<sup>2</sup>
- Death rates for liver cancer are higher in American Indians than in the white population.<sup>3</sup>
- A survey of American Indians found that most men and women over 30 had little understanding of colorectal cancer or the recommended screening for it.<sup>4</sup>

## SYMPTOMS



ABDOMINAL PAIN



FATIGUE



BLOOD IN STOOL



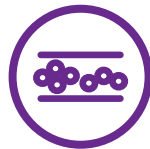
UNEXPLAINED WEIGHT LOSS

## REDUCING YOUR RISKS

There are things you can do to help reduce your risk of developing some of these disease states. Taking care of yourself, and seeking medical care if you think you may be starting to show symptoms, can increase the chances of getting treatment in a timely manner.



QUIT SMOKING



LOWER CHOLESTEROL



EXERCISE REGULARLY



CONTROL DIABETES AND HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



VISIT DOCTOR REGULARLY

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please contact your local care provider or visit these online resources:

- Indian Health Service: [www.ihs.gov](http://www.ihs.gov)
- American Diabetes Association: [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)
- American Cancer Society: [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)
- American Heart Association: [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)

### SOURCES:

1. Benjamin, E. (2019). Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics – 2019 Update: A Report from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*.
2. Mayo Clinic (2018). Diseases and Condition – Colon Cancer. Accessed: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/colon-cancer/symptoms-causes/syc-20353669>
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014). Cancer Health Disparities Among American Indians and Alaska Natives. Accessed: [https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/healthdisparities/what\\_cdc\\_is\\_doing/aian.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/healthdisparities/what_cdc_is_doing/aian.htm)
4. Filippi, M. et al. (2013). American Indian Perceptions of Colorectal Cancer Screening: Viewpoints from Adults under the age 50. *Journal of Cancer Education*.
5. Olin, A. Sealove, B. (2010). Peripheral Artery Disease: Current Insight into the Disease and Its Diagnosis and Management. *Circulation*.
6. Baxter, A. et al. (2017). Increased Prevalence of Moderate and Severe Peripheral Arterial Disease in the American Indian (AI)/Alaska Native (AN) Population; a study of 96,000 AI/AN. *Annals of Vascular Surgery*.
7. Harris, R. Nelson, L. Muller, C. Buchwald, D. (2015). Stroke in American Indians and Alaska Natives: A Systematic Review. *American Journal of Public Health*.