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Risk factors for cardiovascular disease

Three in five Thais have at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular disease is the most important cause of ill health among Thai women and the fifth most important cause among Thai men.

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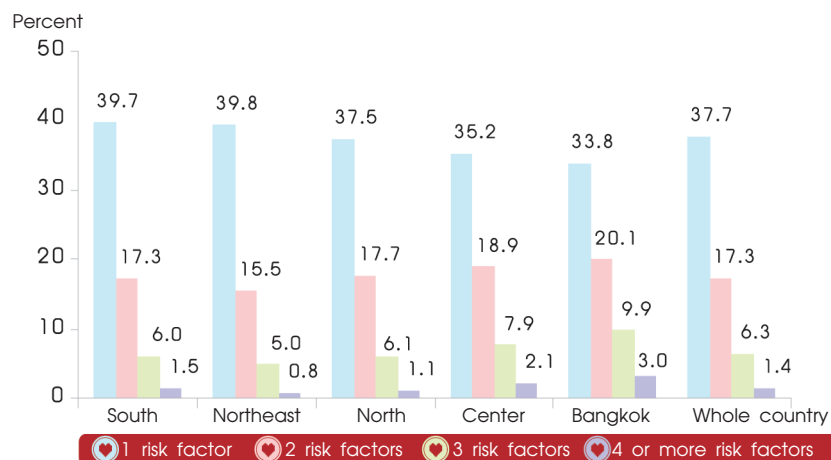
Measures to control cardiovascular disease need to emphasize the simultaneous prevention and treatment of diverse risk factors.

The leading chronic illness among Thais is cardiovascular disease. Twenty eight percent of Thais have some form of cardiovascular disease. Heart attack and stroke kill 65,000 Thais per year. Cardiovascular disease has many risk factors, including high blood pressure, high levels of blood cholesterol, smoking, fat deposits around the waist, excessive body weight, alcohol consumption, insufficient exercise, and diabetes.

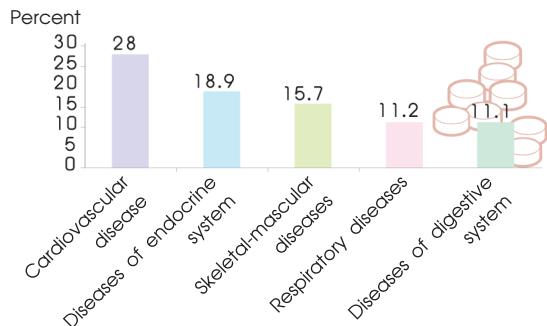
Data from the third National Health Examination Survey in 2004 show that almost 50% of Thai males smoke regularly. Men are more likely than women to have high blood pressure. Men in Bangkok are two times more likely than men elsewhere in Thailand to have diabetes. In other parts of Thailand, diabetes is more common among women than among men. Another risk factor that is more common among women than men is high levels of blood cholesterol, which are three times more common in Bangkok than in the Northeast. Insufficient exercise leading to excessive weight and deposits of fat around the waist is also more common among females than males.

Increases in the risk factors for cardiovascular disease has meant that heart disease rose from being the second most important cause of ill health among Thai women in 1999 to being the first in 2004. Reducing the risk factors would reduce illness and deaths from cardiovascular disease. Policy measures to reduce risk factors include food regulations, changes in the environment aimed at increasing exercise, and improved quality of care. Lifestyle changes that individuals can make include: eating healthier food such as fruit and vegetables, not smoking, increasing exercise levels, and controlling stress. Some of these changes are easier than others, but all are possible with sufficient determination.

Number of risk factors for cardiovascular disease

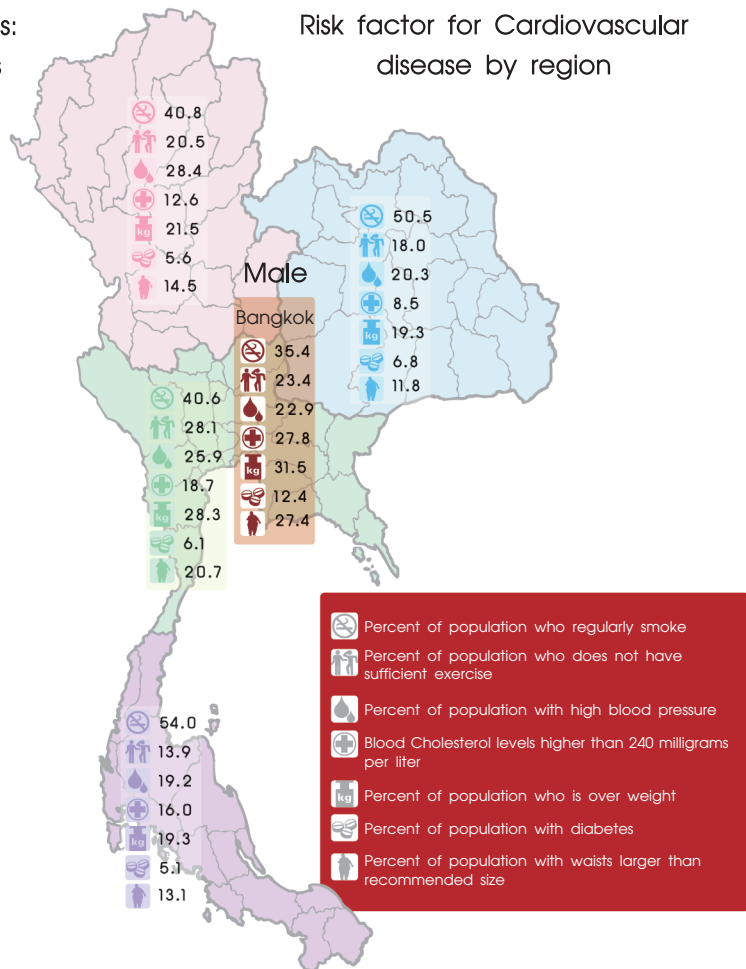


Percent of population with chronic illness: The five most important disease groups



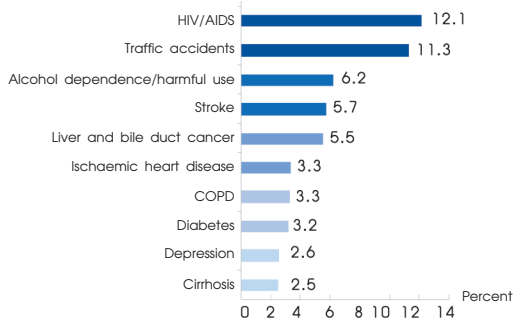
Source: Health and Welfare Survey 2005

Risk factor for Cardiovascular disease by region

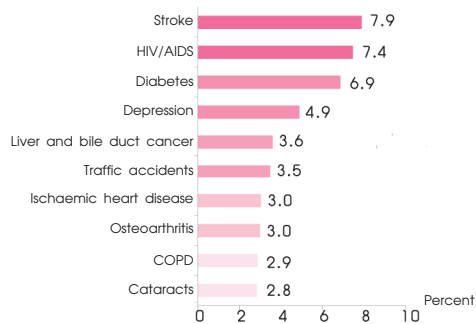


- Percent of population who regularly smoke
- Percent of population who does not have sufficient exercise
- Percent of population with high blood pressure
- Blood Cholesterol levels higher than 240 milligrams per liter
- Percent of population who is over weight
- Percent of population with diabetes
- Percent of population with waists larger than recommended size

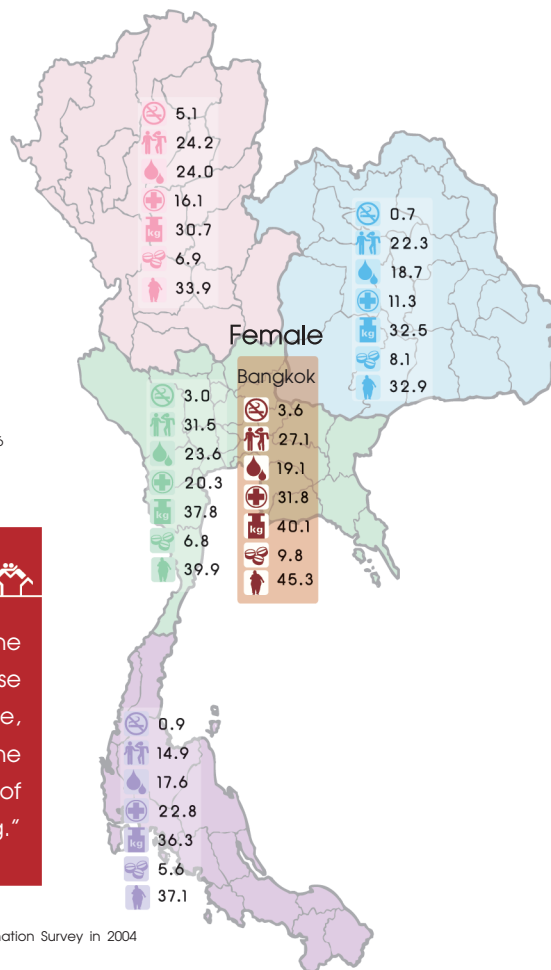
Burden of Disease in male population, 2004



Burden of Disease in female population, 2004



Source: The Thai Working Group on Burden of Disease and Injuries, International Health Policy Program, 2006



insufficient exercise



“People need at least three hours of moderate exercise or one hour of intense exercise per week. Examples of moderate exercise include walking around the workplace, cleaning the house, washing the car, cleaning windows, using a lawnmower to cut the grass, and walking less than 10 minutes to get to work. Examples of intense exercise include walking fast, playing tennis, and swimming.”

Source: the third National Health Examination Survey in 2004