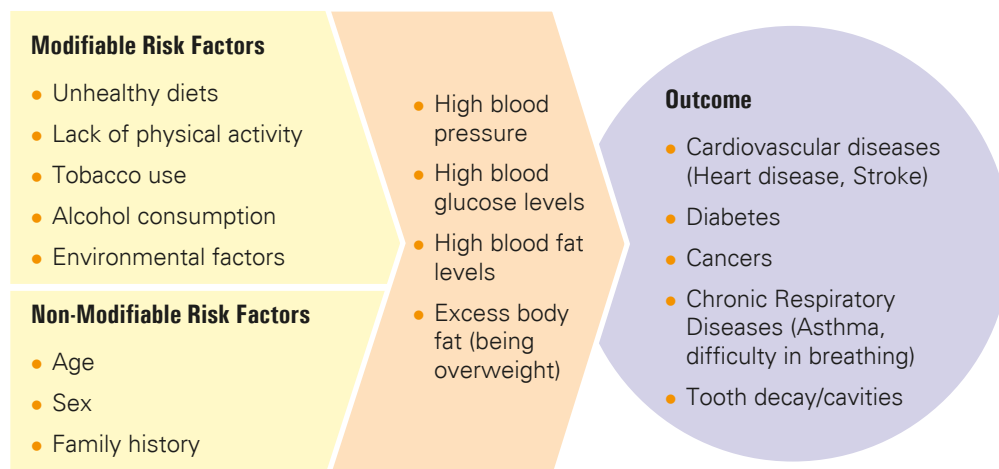


The diagram below shows how risk factors can lead to NCDs. The more risk factors one has, the greater is the chance of getting a particular disease.



Source: Adapted from WHO STEPwise approach to NCD surveillance, WHO-2003

Non-modifiable risk factors

These risk factors are inherent to an individual and cannot be changed, such as age, family history and sex (as seen in the case of Rafia and Shabnam).

- **Age:** With increasing age, our body undergoes changes. As we grow older, there is an increase in the risk of developing high blood pressure, (Hypertension), high blood sugar levels, (Diabetes), high levels of body fat and blood fats. These conditions can lead to Non-Communicable Diseases like - heart and blood vessel diseases (stroke), diabetes, cancer, respiratory problems, etc.
- **Sex:** Both women and men are at risk of developing Non-Communicable Diseases. Men are at a higher risk of developing Non-Communicable Diseases. However, women who have reached menopause are more likely to suffer from heart attacks than pre-menopausal women. Some risk factors for developing Non-Communicable Diseases such as high blood pressure or high blood glucose can affect women even during pregnancy.
- **Family history:** The chances of getting some NCDs are higher if a close family member - parents, siblings also have the disease. This is called Family History. If a person has a family history of NCDs she/he has a high chance of getting the disease.

Modifiable risk factors

These are risk factors that can be changed by specific action,. The harmful effect can be reduced with changes in lifestyle and treatment. Risk factors may affect the individual such as unhealthy diets, lack of physical activity, tobacco and alcohol consumption (as seen in the case of Nawab, Rani and Shyam). Population level risk factors include poverty, poor living and working conditions and environmental factors like pollution from factory smoke, cars and even cooking stove (chulha) in home, can increase the risk of many NCDs.

At the individual level, some modifiable risk factors can be changed if the person changes her/his individual behaviours. However, some factors also require changes at the level of