



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII  
CANCER CENTER



A Newsletter for the Participants  
of the Multiethnic Cohort Study

# Multiethnic BULLETIN

VOL 25 FALL 2025

## Multiethnic Cohort Update

### Hello to all our wonderful study participants!

As another year unfolds, we are thrilled to reconnect through this annual newsletter. Think of this as a friendly way to stay in touch and keep you in the loop about the progress we are making together and the real impact you are having.

Your participation has truly been invaluable. The insights we have gained together not only help us understand cancer and other chronic diseases across diverse communities but also contribute to the well-being of future generations — our children, grandchildren, and communities far and wide. We sincerely appreciate your time and effort. We hope you find this newsletter both interesting and informative.

### LOS ANGELES WILDFIRES

We extend our heartfelt condolences to those affected by the January 2025 Los Angeles wildfires. We recognize that many members of the MEC community faced profound challenges, including the loss of homes and neighborhoods.

Our thoughts are with all of you during this difficult time.

### DEFINING WHOLE GRAINS & INCREASING INTAKE

In our 2024 Multiethnic Cohort (MEC) Bulletin, ([uhcancercenter.org/pdf/mec/newsletters/Fall2024.pdf](http://uhcancercenter.org/pdf/mec/newsletters/Fall2024.pdf)), we featured an article on diet quality assessment using Healthy Eating Index-2015 scores. These data showed that MEC participants' intake of whole grains remained lower than recommended in comparison to the dietary guidelines. Whole grain foods are good choices for a nutritious diet. The term whole grain simply means that the "whole grain" is still within the food product after production, such as barley, brown rice, quinoa, and oats. In contrast, refined grains are grain products where a part of the grain has been removed, such as white rice. This process reduces the grain's nutritional value, mainly by removing fiber.

Over 95% of Americans do not consume enough dietary fiber. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend 22-34 grams of fiber per day, but the average American is only consuming about 10-15 grams per day.

The high fiber content of whole grains may help lower bad cholesterol levels while raising good cholesterol, support blood glucose control, and aid in weight loss or control. Studies have also shown that high-fiber diets can reduce the risk of colorectal cancer.



**Goal Setting:** Aim for at least half of your grains consumed to be whole grains!

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If you have recently moved or have a new phone number, please call us at 1-800-786-3538 (Toll free in California) • (808) 586-2996 (O'ahu) • 1-877-415-8323 (Toll free in Hawai'i) or visit our website at [www.uhcancercenter.org/mec](http://www.uhcancercenter.org/mec)



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## Defining Whole Grains & Increasing Intake

Examples on how to enjoy whole grains in your meals:

### BREAKFAST:

- A bowl of whole grain cereal such as shredded wheat or overnight oats topped with berries and cinnamon
- Have a little extra time? Substitute all purpose flour with oat flour in popular breakfast recipes such as pancakes, muffins, and bagels
- At a cafe? Look out for “whole grain” options

### LUNCH:

- How about a tasty sandwich? Substitute the white bread with whole grain bread
- Cultural preferences? Search for whole wheat options of your favorite grain food items at your local grocery stores including whole wheat naan, pita, and tortillas
- To-go lunch bowls - change out white rice with brown rice or quinoa

### DINNER:

- In soups or stews, use wild rice or barley to add bulk
- Hearty bowl of comforting pasta using whole wheat pasta noodles
- When out at a restaurant, inquire about whole grain options

### SNACKS:

- Popcorn without butter is a simple, whole grain, high fiber snack for any day of the week
- Whole wheat crackers with cheese and fruit

Check out the recipe on the right to help increase your whole grain intake. This of course is a spin on the classic chicken noodle soup recipe, so if you are not a fan of barley, simply replace it with any other whole grain alternative such as whole grain noodles and brown rice.



### RECIPE

## CHICKEN BARLEY SOUP

### Ingredients:

- 1 broiler/fryer chicken (2 to 3 pounds), cut up
- 8 cups water
- 1-1/2 cups chopped carrots
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1/2 cup medium pearl barley
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1 teaspoon chicken bouillon granules
- 1 teaspoon salt, optional
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/2 teaspoon poultry seasoning
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon rubbed sage

### Directions:

In a large stockpot, cook chicken in water until tender. Cool broth and skim off fat. Set chicken aside until cool enough to handle. Remove meat from bones; discard bones and cut meat into cubes. Return meat to pot, along with remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer 1 hour or until vegetables and barley are tender. Discard bay leaf before serving.

### Nutrition Facts:

1 cup: 259 calories, 5g fat (0 saturated fat), 89mg cholesterol, 127mg sodium, 22g carbohydrate (0 sugars, 0 fiber), 31g protein.

### Diabetic Exchanges:

2-1/2 lean meat, 1 starch, 1 vegetable.

Source: <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/chicken-barley-soup/>



# CHARTING A HEALTHIER FUTURE:

## The Optimistic Message of Life Expectancy Curves

Life expectancy is one of the most widely used tools for understanding how healthy a population is. It gives us an estimate of how long, on average, individuals in that population can expect to live, based on current rates of death and survival. The idea is simple: the healthier a population is overall, the longer its members tend to live. But when we look more closely at how life expectancy changes with age, the patterns get more interesting.

By examining the shape of life expectancy curves, we do more than just summarize the present—we also get a sense of what might happen in the future. Steeper drops in the curve tell us that people are dying off more quickly, while a more gradual slope suggests longer lives and slower population decline.

Eventually, the curve begins to flatten out—meaning that even as people continue to age, the number of deaths in each additional year starts to shrink. Why? Because by that point, the people still alive are those who have already survived many of life’s health risks. These people may have favorable genetics, lifelong healthy habits, and/or access to good care. As a result, the rate of deaths decreases with each passing year of chronological age, and the curve starts to stretch out horizontally.

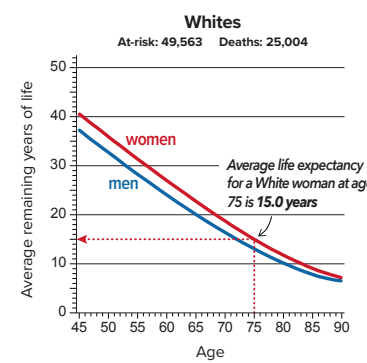
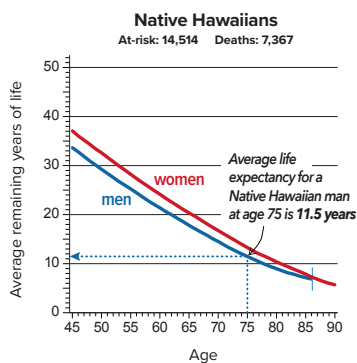
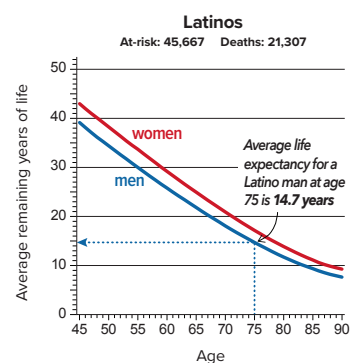
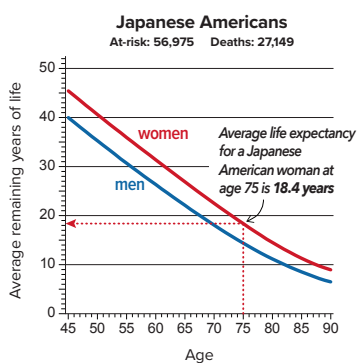
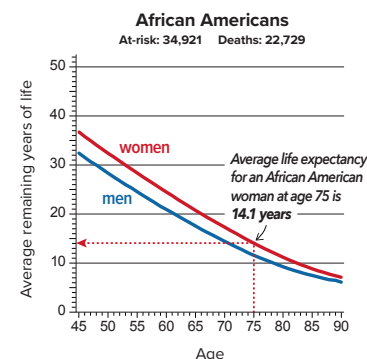
**INSIGHTS FROM THE MEC:** The MEC is one of the largest and the most diverse prospective cohort studies based in the United States. Under continuous follow-up since 1993, it is the foremost study population for African American, Japanese American, Latino, Native Hawaiian, and White adults in the U.S. Mortality status of MEC participants is available through 2019, providing more than 25 years of longitudinal data to examine differences in population health across racial and ethnic groups, as well as between sexes.

The figure displays life expectancy curves for the MEC members by race, ethnicity, and sex. Women consistently exhibit greater survival than men—at any given age, women are expected to live longer. However, at older ages, men’s and women’s life expectancies come closer together for all racial and ethnic groups.

**THE TAKEAWAY:** Getting older isn’t a one-size-fits-all thing. It is a unique journey shaped by some factors we cannot change and many factors we can. When we look at how long people are living, those “flattened curves” show that more people are living longer and healthier, which gives us a really hopeful message.

The bottom line is, **we can truly make a difference in our later years.** If we focus on our daily habits, stay engaged with life, and actively manage our health,

### AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY for MEC Participants by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, 1993–2019



**we can significantly improve how much we enjoy and thrive in our older age.** It highlights how amazing and flexible the human body and mind are, and it pushes us to embrace getting older in a healthy way, with a positive attitude and a clear sense of purpose.





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## Staying Active for Healthy Aging

Physical activity is essential for healthy aging, supporting muscle and bone strength, preventing disease, and maintaining independence. The National Institutes of Health recommends that adults 65 and older get at least **150 minutes of moderate intensity** activity each week, such as brisk walking where you can talk but not sing. Alternatively, aim for **75 minutes of vigorous activity** like jogging, where speaking is difficult. It is also advised to include strength and balance training twice a week to maintain muscle mass and help prevent falls.

We recently analyzed data for a subgroup of MEC participants who answered a survey and wore a device to assess physical activity patterns. Their data showed that staying active was clearly linked to health benefits such as reduced obesity and liver fat, as well as lower blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose levels. However, we found that many participants, especially men, reported higher activity levels than what was recorded by the device. **Twenty to thirty percent** of participants

believed they were meeting physical activity guidelines but in reality, only **10–20% met the guidelines**. This difference highlights the importance of tracking physical activity accurately, which many wearable devices are designed to support.

### WAYS TO INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

At any age, start small, choose enjoyable activities like walking or gardening, set goals, track your progress, and stay social. Don't forget—**staying active doesn't have to mean going to the gym**. Fun, social activities like walking with friends or dancing can be great ways to stay moving. Even **small daily changes**, such as standing up or walking during TV commercials, can make a meaningful impact. By staying mindful and working toward activity goals, **older adults can invest in better long-term health**.

### HINT!

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE SHOWS  
THAT EXERCISING WITH OTHERS  
BOOSTS YOUR GAINS!