“Pepys gave it up because he feared he was going blind. His eyes had started to be painful when he did close work or reading by candlelight as early as 1663—and so to bed, being weary, sleepy, and my eyes begin to fail me, looking so long by candlelight upon white paper—but over the next few years he mentioned the problem very rarely, and it was only from 1667 that it became a frequent complaint. By then his eyes were suffering from his years of close work; increasingly they hurt if he read for too long, they reacted badly to bright light, and they felt sore and watered. None of the remedies he tried—spectacles, lotions, eye drops, pills, purges, the use of a paper roll when reading—did much to help. Modern medical opinion is that he had long sight (hypermetropia), which made reading difficult and some astigmatism. He was not going blind and his eyes deteriorated no further. (Tomalin, Claire: Samuel Pepys, The Unequal Self. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2003:273)

Public health agencies and governmental health organisations continue to publish recommended dietary guidelines. These are meant to address the growing problem of diseases related to poor diets. In a random digit dial telephone survey in Olmstead County, Minnesota, the results suggest that these guidelines are ignored by the vast majority of the population. In this study only 16% of the population of Olmstead County reported meeting the standard dietary recommendations for consuming both five or more servings of fruit and or vegetable per day and no more than 30% of total calories from fat. More effective interventions are needed to improve dietary habits in most communities. (Mayo Clinic Proc 2003;78:161–6)

The epidemiology of Chlamydia trachomatis infection in men has not been well defined. In women established screening programmes have demonstrated the benefit of routine screening to reduce the prevalence of this infection over time. In a cross sectional study of C trachomatis prevalence and associated risk factors among men tested at sexually transmitted disease clinics in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington the overall prevalence of C trachomatis was found to be 10.3%. Using either the presence of clinical signs or report of a sexual partner with a sexually transmitted disease in combination with selective screening of all men 25 years of age or less detected the majority of infections in this population. (American Journal of Preventive Medicine 2003;24:36–42)