

Health

Health is the level of functional and metabolic efficiency of a living organism. The World Health Organization (WHO) defined human health in its broader sense in its 1948 constitution as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."^{[1][2]} This definition has been subject to controversy, in particular as lacking operational value, the ambiguity in developing cohesive health strategies, and because of the problem created by use of the word "complete", which makes it practically impossible to achieve.^{[3][4][5]} Other definitions have been proposed, among which a recent definition that correlates health and personal satisfaction.^[6] ^[7]

An alternative approach focuses on avoiding definitions, which demand precise descriptions of the term. Instead, following a three-year global conversation, convened by Alex Jadad^{[8][9]}, "health" has been conceptualized as the ability to adapt and self manage when individuals communities face physical, mental or social challenges^[10].

Contents

History

Determinants

- Potential issues

Mental health

Maintaining

- Diet
- Exercise
- Sleep
- Role of science
- Role of public health
- Self-care strategies

Occupational

See also

References

External links

History

The definition of health has evolved over time. In keeping with the biomedical perspective, early definitions of health focused on the theme of the body's ability to function; health was seen as a state of normal function that could be disrupted from time to time by disease. An example of such a definition of health is: "a state characterized by anatomic, physiologic, and psychological integrity; ability to perform personally valued family, work, and community roles; ability to deal with physical, biological, psychological, and social stress".^[11] Then, in 1948, in a radical departure from previous definitions, the World Health Organization (WHO) proposed a definition that aimed higher: linking health to well-being, in terms of "physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity".^[12] Although this definition was welcomed by some as being innovative, it was also criticized as being vague, excessively broad, and was not construed as measurable. For a long time, it was set aside as an impractical ideal and most discussions of health returned to the practicality of the biomedical model.^[13]

Just as there was a shift from viewing disease as a state to thinking of it as a process, the same shift happened in definitions of health. Again, the WHO played a leading role when it fostered the development of the health promotion movement in the 1980s. This brought in a new conception of health, not as a state, but in dynamic terms of resiliency, in other words, as "a resource for living". 1984 WHO revised the definition of health defined it as "the extent to which an individual or group is able to realize aspirations and satisfy needs and to change or cope with the environment. Health is a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living; it is a positive concept, emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities".^[14] Thus, health referred to the ability to maintain homeostasis and recover from insults. Mental, intellectual, emotional, and social health referred to a person's ability to handle stress, to acquire skills, to maintain relationships, all of which form resources for resiliency and independent living.^[13]

Since the late 1970s, the federal Healthy People Initiative has been a visible component of the United States' approach to improving population health.^[15] In each decade, a new version of Healthy People is issued,^[16] featuring updated goals and identifying topic areas and quantifiable objectives for health improvement during the succeeding ten years, with assessment at that point of progress or lack thereof. Progress has been limited to many objectives, leading to concerns about the effectiveness of Healthy People in shaping outcomes in the context of a decentralized and uncoordinated US health system. Healthy People 2020 gives more prominence to health promotion and preventive approaches and adds a substantive focus on the importance of addressing social determinants of health. A new expanded digital interface facilitates use and dissemination rather than bulky printed books as produced in the past. The impact of these changes to Healthy People will be determined in the coming years.^[17]

Systematic activities to prevent or cure health problems and promote good health in humans are undertaken by health care providers. Applications with regard to animal health are covered by the veterinary sciences. The term "healthy" is also widely used in the context of many types of non-living organizations and their impacts for the benefit of humans, such as in the sense of healthy communities, healthy cities or healthy environments. In addition to health care interventions and a person's surroundings, a number of other factors are known to influence the health status of individuals, including their background, lifestyle, and economic, social conditions, and spirituality; these are referred to as "determinants of health." Studies have shown that high levels of stress can affect human health.^[18]

In the first decade of the 21st century, the conceptualization of health as an ability opened the door for self-assessments to become the main indicators to judge the performance of efforts aimed at improving human health.^[19] It also created the opportunity for every person to feel healthy, even in the presence of multiple chronic diseases, or a terminal condition, and for the re-examination of determinants of health, away from the traditional approach that focuses on the reduction of the prevalence of diseases.^[20]

Determinants

Generally, the context in which an individual lives is of great importance for both his health status and quality of their life.^[21] It is increasingly recognized that health is maintained and improved not only through the advancement and application of health science, but also through the efforts and intelligent lifestyle choices of the individual and society. According to the World Health Organization, the main determinants of health include the social and economic environment, the physical environment, and the person's individual characteristics and behaviors.^[22]

More specifically, key factors that have been found to influence whether people are healthy or unhealthy include the following:^{[22][23][24]}

- Income and social status
- Social support networks
- Education and literacy
- Employment/working conditions
- Social environments
- Physical environments
- Personal health practices and coping skills
- Healthy child development
- Biology and genetics
- Health care services
- Gender
- Culture

An increasing number of studies and reports from different organizations and contexts examine the linkages between health and different factors, including lifestyles, environments, health care organization, and health policy, one specific health policy brought into many countries in recent years was the introduction of the sugar tax. Beverage taxes came into light with increasing concerns about obesity, particularly among youth. Sugar-sweetened beverages have become a target of anti-obesity initiatives with increasing evidence of their link to obesity.^[25]— such as the 1974 Lalonde report from Canada,^[24] the Alameda County Study in California,^[26] and the series of World Health Reports of the World Health Organization, which focuses on global health issues including access to health care and improving public health outcomes, especially indeveloping countries^[27]

The concept of the "*health field*," as distinct from medical care, emerged from the Lalonde report from Canada. The report identified three interdependent fields as key determinants of an individual's health. These are^[24]



Donald Henderson as part of the CDC's smallpox eradication team in 1966.

- Lifestyle: the aggregation of personal decisions (i.e., over which the individual has control) that can be said to contribute to, or cause, illness or death;
- Environmental: all matters related to health external to the human body and over which the individual has little or no control;
- Biomedical: all aspects of health, physical and mental, developed within the human body as influenced by genetic make-up.

The maintenance and promotion of health is achieved through different combination of physical, mental, and social well-being, together sometimes referred to as the "*health triangle*."^{[28][29]} The WHO's 1986 Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion further stated that health is not just a state, but also "a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities."^[30]

Focusing more on lifestyle issues and their relationships with functional health, data from the Alameda County Study suggested that people can improve their health via exercise, enough sleep, maintaining a healthy body weight, limiting alcohol use, and avoiding smoking.^[31] Health and illness can co-exist, as even people with multiple chronic diseases or terminal illnesses can consider themselves healthy.^[32]

The environment is often cited as an important factor influencing the health status of individuals. This includes characteristics of the natural environment, the built environment, and the social environment. Factors such as clean water and air, adequate housing, and safe communities and roads all have been found to contribute to good health, especially to the health of infants and children.^{[22][33]} Some studies have shown that a lack of neighborhood recreational spaces including natural environment leads to lower levels of personal satisfaction and higher levels of obesity, linked to lower overall health and well being.^[34] This suggests that the positive health benefits of natural space in urban neighborhoods should be taken into account in public policy and land use.

Genetics, or inherited traits from parents, also play a role in determining the health status of individuals and populations. This can encompass both the predisposition to certain diseases and health conditions, as well as the habits and behaviors individuals develop through the lifestyle of their families. For example, genetics may play a role in the manner in which people cope with stress, either mental, emotional or physical. For example, obesity is a significant problem in the United States that contributes to bad mental health and causes stress in the lives of great numbers of people^[35]. (One difficulty is the issue raised by the debate over the relative strengths of genetics and other factors; interactions between genetics and environment may be of particular importance.)

Potential issues

A number of types of health issues are common around the globe. Disease is one of the most common. According to GlobalIssues.org, approximately 36 million people die each year from non-communicable (not contagious) disease including cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and chronic lung disease (Shah, 2014).

Among communicable diseases, both viral and bacterial, AIDS/HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria are the most common, causing millions of deaths every year (2014).

Another health issue that causes death or contributes to other health problems is malnutrition, especially among children. One of the groups malnutrition affects most is young children. Approximately 7.5 million children under the age of 5 die from malnutrition, usually brought on by not having the money to find or make food (2014).

Bodily injuries are also a common health issue worldwide. These injuries, including broken bones, fractures, and burns can reduce a person's quality of life or can cause fatalities including infections that resulted from the injury or the severity injury in general (Moffett, 2013).^[36]

Lifestyle choices are contributing factors to poor health in many cases. These include smoking cigarettes, and can also include a poor diet, whether it is overeating or an overly constrictive diet. Inactivity can also contribute to health issues and also a lack of sleep, excessive alcohol consumption, and neglect of oral hygiene (2013). There are also genetic disorders that are inherited by the person and can vary in how much they affect the person and when they surface (2013).

Though the majority of these health issues are preventable, a major contributor to global ill health is the fact that approximately 1 billion people lack access to health care systems (Shah, 2014). Arguably, the most common and harmful health issue is that a great many people do not have access to quality remedies.^{[37][38]}

Mental health

The World Health Organization describes mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community".^[39] Mental Health is not just the absence of mental illness.^[40]

Mental illness is described as 'the spectrum of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral conditions that interfere with social and emotional well-being and the lives and productivity of people. Having a mental illness can seriously impair, temporarily or permanently, the mental functioning of a person. Other terms include: 'mental health problem', 'illness', 'disorder', 'dysfunction'.^[41]

Roughly a quarter of all adults 18 and over in the US are considered diagnosable with mental illness. Mental illnesses are the leading cause of disability in the US and Canada. Examples include, schizophrenia, ADHD, major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and autism.^[42]

Many teens suffer from mental health issues in response to the pressures of society and social problems they encounter. Some of the key mental health issues seen in teens are: depression, eating disorders and drug abuse. There are many ways to prevent these health issues from occurring such as communicating well with a teen suffering from mental health issues. Mental health can be treated and be attentive to teens' behavior^[43]

Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:

- Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
- Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
- Family history of mental health problems

Maintaining

Achieving and maintaining health is an ongoing process, shaped by both the evolution of health care knowledge and practices as well as personal strategies and organized interventions for staying healthy

Diet

An important way to maintain your personal health is to have a healthy diet. A healthy diet includes a variety of plant-based and animal-based foods that provide nutrients to your body. Such nutrients give you energy and keep your body running. Nutrients help build and strengthen bones, muscles, and tendons and also regulate body processes (i.e. blood pressure). The food guide pyramid is a pyramid-shaped guide of healthy foods divided into sections. Each section shows the recommended intake for each food group (i.e. Protein, Fat, Carbohydrates, and Sugars). Making healthy food choices is important because it can lower your risk of heart disease, developing some types of cancer, and it will contribute to maintaining a healthy weight.^[46]

The Mediterranean diet is commonly associated with health-promoting effects due to the fact that it contains some bioactive compounds like phenolic compounds, isoprenoids and alkaloids.^[47]

Exercise

Physical exercise enhances or maintains physical fitness and overall health and wellness. It strengthens muscles and improves the cardiovascular system. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH) there are four types of exercise; Endurance, Strength, Flexibility, and Balance. Endurance exercises are those that will elevate your heart rate including; walking, jogging, running, hiking etc.^[48]

Sleep

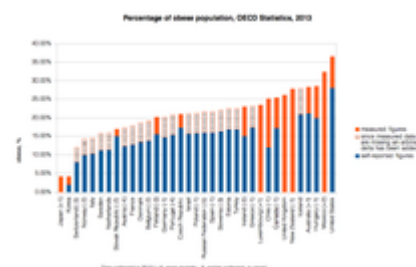
Sleep is an essential component to maintaining health. In children, sleep is also vital for growth and development. Ongoing sleep deprivation has been linked to an increased risk for some chronic health problems. In addition, sleep deprivation has been shown to correlate with both increased susceptibility to illness and slower recovery times from illness.^[49] In one study, people with chronic insufficient sleep, set as six hours of sleep a night or less, were found to be four times more likely to catch a cold compared to those who reported sleeping for seven hours or more a night.^[50] Due to the role of sleep in regulating metabolism, insufficient sleep may also play a role in weight gain or, conversely, in impeding weight loss.^[51] Additionally, in 2007, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, which is the cancer research agency for the World Health Organization, declared that "shiftwork that involves circadian disruption is probably carcinogenic to humans," speaking to the dangers of long-term nighttime work due to its intrusion on sleep.^[52] In 2015, the National Sleep Foundation released updated recommendations for sleep duration requirements based on age and concluded that "Individuals who habitually sleep outside the normal range may be exhibiting signs or symptoms of serious health problems or, if done volitionally, may be compromising their health and well-being."^[53]

Age and condition	Sleep Needs
Newborns (0–3 months)	14 to 17 hours
Infants (4–11 months)	12 to 15 hours
Toddlers (1–2 years)	11 to 14 hours
Preschoolers (3–5 years)	10 to 13 hours
School-age children (6–13 years)	9 to 11 hours
Teenagers (14–17 years)	8 to 10 hours
Adults (18–64 years)	7 to 9 hours
Older Adults (65 years and over)	7 to 8 hours

Role of science



Percentage of overweight or obese population in 2010, Data source: OECD's iLibrary, <http://stats.oecd.org>^[44]



Percentage of obese population in 2010, Data source: OECD's iLibrary, <http://stats.oecd.org>^[45]

Health science is the branch of science focused on health. There are two main approaches to health science: the study and research of the body and health-related issues to understand how humans (and animals) function, and the application of that knowledge to improve health and to prevent and cure diseases and other physical and mental impairments. The science builds on many sub-fields, including biology, biochemistry, physics, epidemiology, pharmacology, medical sociology. Applied health sciences endeavor to better understand and improve human health through applications in areas such as health education, biomedical engineering, biotechnology and public health.

Organized interventions to improve health based on the principles and procedures developed through the health sciences are provided by practitioners trained in medicine, nursing, nutrition, pharmacy, social work, psychology, occupational therapy, physical therapy and other health care professions. Clinical practitioners focus mainly on the health of individuals, while public health practitioners consider the overall health of communities and populations. Workplace wellness programs are increasingly adopted by companies for their value in improving the health and well-being of their employees, as are school health services in order to improve the health and well-being of children.

Role of public health

Public health has been described as "the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts and informed choices of society, organizations, public and private, communities and individuals."^[54] It is concerned with threats to the overall health of a community based on population health analysis. The population in question can be as small as a handful of people or as large as all the inhabitants of several continents (for instance, in the case of a pandemic). Public health has many sub-fields, but typically includes the interdisciplinary categories of epidemiology, biostatistics and health services. Environmental health, community health, behavioral health, and occupational health are also important areas of public health.

The focus of public health interventions is to prevent and manage diseases, injuries and other health conditions through surveillance of cases and the promotion of healthy behavior, communities, and (in aspects relevant to human health) environments. Its aim is to prevent health problems from happening or re-occurring by implementing educational programs, developing policies, administering services and conducting research.^[55] In many cases, treating a disease or controlling a pathogen can be vital to preventing it in others, such as during an outbreak. Vaccination programs and distribution of condoms to prevent the spread of communicable diseases are examples of common preventive public health measures, as are educational campaigns to promote vaccination and the use of condoms (including overcoming resistance to such).

Public health also takes various actions to limit the health disparities between different areas of the country and, in some cases, the continent or world. One issue is the access of individuals and communities to health care in terms of financial, geographical or socio-cultural constraints to accessing and using services.^[56] Applications of the public health system include the areas of maternal and child health, health services administration, emergency response, and prevention and control of infectious and chronic diseases.

The great positive impact of public health programs is widely acknowledged. Due in part to the policies and actions developed through public health, the 20th century registered a decrease in the mortality rates for infants and children and a continual increase in life expectancy in most parts of the world. For example, it is estimated that life expectancy has increased for Americans by thirty years since 1900,^[57] and worldwide by six years since 1990.^[58]



Play media

The Dutch Public Health Service provides medical care for the natives of the Dutch East Indies, May 1946



Postage stamp, New Zealand, 1933. Public health has been promoted – and depicted – in a wide variety of ways.

Self-care strategies

Personal health depends partially on the active, passive, and assisted cues people observe and adopt about their own health. These include personal actions for preventing or minimizing the effects of a disease, usually a chronic condition, through integrative care. They also include personal hygiene practices to prevent infection and illness, such as bathing and washing hands with soap; brushing and flossing teeth; storing, preparing and handling food safely; and many others. The information gleaned from personal observations of daily living – such as about sleep patterns, exercise behavior, nutritional intake and environmental features – may be used to inform personal decisions and actions (*e.g.*, "I feel tired in the morning so I am going to try sleeping on a different pillow"), as well as clinical decisions and treatment plans (*e.g.*, a patient who notices his or her shoes are tighter than usual may be having exacerbation of left-sided heart failure, and may require diuretic medication to reduce fluid overload).^[59]

Personal health also depends partially on the social structure of a person's life. The maintenance of strong social relationships, volunteering, and other social activities have been linked to positive mental health and also increased longevity. One American study among seniors over age 70, found that frequent volunteering was associated with reduced risk of dying compared with older persons who did not volunteer, regardless of physical health status.^[60] Another study from Singapore reported that volunteering retirees had significantly better cognitive performance scores, fewer depressive symptoms and better mental well-being and life satisfaction than non-volunteering retirees.^[61]

Prolonged psychological stress may negatively impact health, and has been cited as a factor in cognitive impairment with aging, depressive illness, and expression of disease.^[62] Stress management is the application of methods to either reduce stress or increase tolerance to stress. Relaxation techniques are physical methods used to relieve stress. Psychological methods include cognitive therapy, meditation, and positive thinking, which work by reducing response to stress. Improving relevant skills, such as problem solving and time management skills, reduces uncertainty and builds confidence, which also reduces the reaction to stress-causing situations where those skills are applicable.

Occupational

In addition to safety risks, many jobs also present risks of disease, illness and other long-term health problems. Among the most common occupational diseases are various forms of pneumoconiosis, including silicosis and coal worker's pneumoconiosis (black lung disease). Asthma is another respiratory illness that many workers are vulnerable to. Workers may also be vulnerable to skin diseases, including eczema, dermatitis, urticaria, sunburn, and skin cancer.^{[63][64]} Other occupational diseases of concern include carpal tunnel syndrome and lead poisoning.

As the number of service sector jobs has risen in developed countries, more and more jobs have become sedentary, presenting a different array of health problems than those associated with manufacturing and the primary sector. Contemporary problems, such as the growing rate of obesity and issues relating to stress and overwork in many countries, have further complicated the interaction between work and health.

Many governments view occupational health as a social challenge and have formed public organizations to ensure the health and safety of workers. Examples of these include the British Health and Safety Executive and in the United States, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, which conducts research on occupational health and safety, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration which handles regulation and policy relating to worker safety and health.^{[65][66][67]}

See also

- Men's health
- Women's health
- Youth health
- Population health



A lady washing her hands c. 1655

- Public health
- Disease burden
- Health care
- Health system
- Medicine
- Human enhancement
- One Health
- Healing
- Wellness

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