

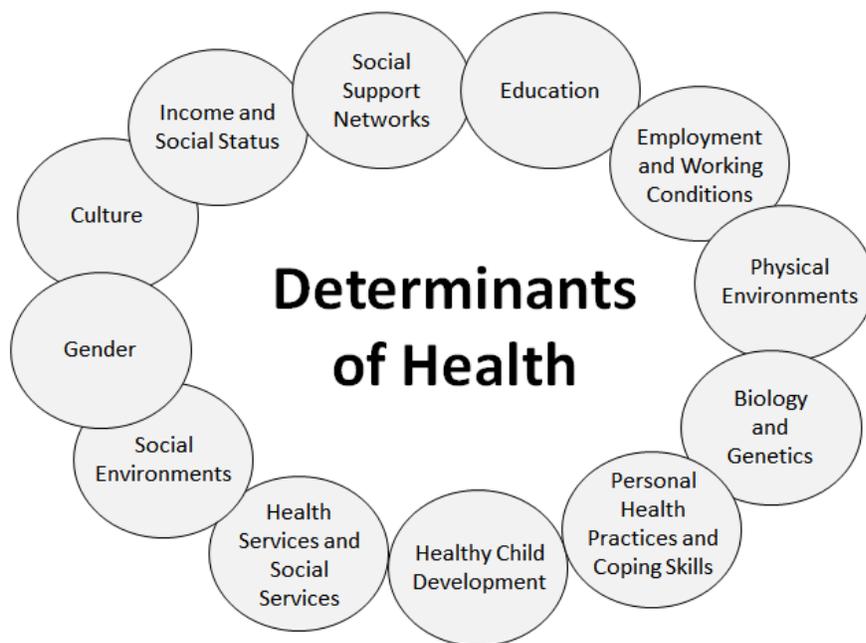
First Name: _____

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SS1010-13 – Twelve Determinants of Health

Health Canada and the 12 Determinants of Health

Health Canada has identified 12 determinants of health:



From <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/what-determines-health.html#determinants>

This deceptively simple story speaks to the complex set of factors or conditions that determine the level of health of every Canadian.

"Why is Jason in the hospital?"

Because he has a bad infection in his leg.

But why does he have an infection?"

Because he has a cut on his leg and it got infected.

But why does he have a cut on his leg?"

Because he was playing in the junk yard next to his apartment building and there was some sharp, jagged steel there that he fell on.

But why was he playing in a junk yard?"

Because his neighborhood is kind of run down. A lot of kids play there and there is no one to supervise them.

But why does he live in that neighborhood?"

Because his parents can't afford a nicer place to live.

But why can't his parents afford a nicer place to live?"

Because his Dad is unemployed and his Mom is sick.

But why is his Dad unemployed?"

Because he doesn't have much education and he can't find a job.

But why ...?"

Key Determinant #1: Income and Social Status

Health status improves at each step up the income and social hierarchy. High income determines living conditions such as safe housing and ability to buy sufficient good food. The healthiest populations are those in societies which are prosperous and have an equitable distribution of wealth.

- *Only 47% of Canadians in the lowest income bracket rate their health as very good or excellent, compared with 73% of Canadians in the highest income group.*
- *Low-income Canadians are more likely to die earlier and to suffer more illnesses than Canadians with higher incomes, regardless of age, sex, race and place of residence.*

Key Determinant #2: Social Support Networks

Support from families, friends and communities is associated with better health. The caring and respect that occurs in social relationships, and the resulting sense of satisfaction and well-being, seem to act as a buffer against health problems.

- *An extensive study in California found that, for men and women, the more social contacts people have, the lower their premature death rates.*
- *Another U.S. study found that low availability of emotional support and low social participation were associated with all-cause mortality (disease or harmful exposure).*

Key Determinant #3: Education and Literacy

Education is closely tied to socioeconomic status, and effective education for children and lifelong learning for adults are key contributors to health and prosperity for individuals, and for the country. Education contributes to health and prosperity by equipping people with knowledge and skills for problem solving, and helps provide a sense of control and mastery over life circumstances. It increases opportunities for job and income security, and job satisfaction. And it improves people's ability to access and understand information to help keep them healthy.

- *Canadians with low literacy skills are more likely to be unemployed and poor, to suffer poorer health and to die earlier than Canadians with high levels of literacy*
- *People with higher levels of education have better access to healthy physical environments and are better able to prepare their children for school than people with low levels of education. They also tend to smoke less, to be more physically active and to have access to healthier foods.*

Key Determinant #4: Employment and Working Conditions

Unemployment, underemployment, stressful or unsafe work are associated with poorer health.

People who have more control over their work circumstances and fewer stress related demands of the job are healthier and often live longer than those in more stressful or riskier work and activities.

- *A major review done for the World Health Organization found that high levels of unemployment and economic instability in a society cause significant mental health problems and adverse effects on the physical health of unemployed individuals, their families and their communities.*

Key Determinant #5: Social Environments

The importance of social support also extends to the broader community. Social stability, recognition of diversity, safety, good working relationships, and cohesive communities provide a supportive society that reduces or avoids many potential risks to good health.

- *In the U.S., high levels of trust and group membership were found to be associated with reduced mortality rates.*

Key Determinant #6: Physical Environments

The physical environment is an important determinant of health. At certain levels of exposure, contaminants in our air, water, food and soil can cause a variety of adverse health effects, including cancer, birth defects, respiratory illness and gastrointestinal ailments.

- *Air pollution, including exposure to second hand tobacco smoke, has a significant association with health. A study in southern Ontario found a consistent link between hospital admissions for respiratory illness in the summer months and levels of sulphates and ozone in the air.*

Key Determinant #7: Personal Health Practices and Coping Skills

Personal Health Practices and Coping Skills refer to those actions by which individuals can prevent diseases and promote self-care, cope with challenges, and develop self-reliance, solve problems and make choices that enhance health.

- *In Canada, smoking is estimated to be responsible for at least one-quarter of all deaths for adults between the ages of 35 and 84. Rates of smoking have increased substantially among adolescents and youth, particularly among young women, over the past five years and smoking rates among Aboriginal people are double the overall rate for Canada as a whole.*
- *Diet in general and the consumption of fat in particular are linked to some of the major causes of death, including cancer and coronary heart disease. The proportion of overweight men and women in Canada increased steadily between 1985 and 1996/97 < from 22% to 34% among men and from 14% to 23% among women.*

Key Determinant #8: Healthy Child Development

New evidence on the effects of early experiences on brain development, school readiness and health in later life has sparked a growing consensus about early child development as a powerful determinant of health in its own right. *A loving, secure attachment between parents/caregivers and babies in the first 18 months of life helps children to develop trust, self-esteem, emotional control and the ability to have positive relationships with others in later life.*

- *A low weight at birth links with problems not just during childhood, but also in adulthood. Research shows a strong relationship between income level of the mother and the baby's birth weight. The effect occurs not just for the most economically disadvantaged group. Mothers at each step up the income scale have babies with higher birth weights, on average, than those on the step below. This tells us the problems are not just a result of poor maternal nutrition and poor health practices associated with poverty, although the most serious problems occur in the lowest income group.*

Key Determinant #9: Biology and Genetic Endowment

Genetic endowment provides an inherited predisposition to a wide range of individual responses that affect health status. Although socio-economic and environmental factors are important determinants of overall health, in some circumstances genetic endowment appears to predispose certain individuals to particular diseases or health problems.

- *Aging is not synonymous with poor health. Active living and the provision of opportunities for lifelong learning may be particularly important for maintaining health and cognitive capacity in old age. And studies on education level and dementia suggest that exposure to education and lifelong learning may create reserve capacity in the brain that compensates for cognitive losses that occur with biological aging.*

Key Determinant #10: Health Services

Health services, particularly those designed to maintain and promote health, to prevent disease, and to restore health and function contribute to population health. The health services continuum of care includes treatment and secondary prevention.

- *Disease and injury prevention activities in areas such as immunization and the use of mammography are showing positive results. These activities must continue if progress is to be maintained.*
- *Access to universally insured care remains largely unrelated to income; however, many low- and moderate-income Canadians have limited or no access to health services such as eye care, dentistry, mental health counselling and prescription drugs.*

Key Determinant #11: Gender

Gender refers to the array of society-determined roles, personality traits, attitudes, behaviors, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis.

- *Men are more likely to die prematurely than women, largely as a result of heart disease, fatal unintentional injuries, cancer and suicide. Rates of potential years of life lost before age 70 are almost twice as high for men than women and approximately three times as high among men aged 20 to 34.*
- *While women live longer than men, they are more likely to suffer depression, stress overload (often due to efforts to balance work and family life), chronic conditions such as arthritis and allergies, and injuries and death resulting from family violence.*

Key Determinant #12: Culture

Some persons or groups may face additional health risks due to a socio-economic environment, which is largely determined by dominant cultural values that contribute to the perpetuation of conditions such as marginalization, stigmatization, loss or devaluation of language and culture and lack of access to culturally appropriate health care and services.

- *Despite major improvements since 1979, infant mortality rates among First Nations people in 1994 were still twice as high as among the Canadian population as a whole and the prevalence of major chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart problems, cancer hypertension and arthritis/rheumatism, is significantly higher in Aboriginal communities and appears to be increasing.*