

# Eating well for good health

Lessons on nutrition and healthy diets





# What it means to be healthy and well-nourished



What it means to be healthy and well-nourished is about the many factors that affect our health and well-being. It explains how our nutritional status depends both on our personal choices and on fundamental conditions such as nutritious food, clean water, medical care and education. It shows how poverty is an underlying cause of most forms of malnutrition and discusses the serious health problems caused by poor nutrition. It describes the most common problems of poor nutrition, their signs and symptoms.



**Lesson 1**  
Exploring the meaning of good health and well-being



**Lesson 2**  
Analysing the conditions that affect nutritional status



**Lesson 3**  
Understanding problems of poor nutrition



## Topic 1

What it means  
to be healthy  
and well-nourished



### LEARNING OBJECTIVES



*By the end of  
the lesson, you  
will be able to:*

- name and explain the three dimensions of health;
- provide examples of personal choices that can improve or harm our health;
- identify and explain other factors that also affect our health.

### Lesson 1

# Exploring the meaning of good health and well-being

### LESSON OVERVIEW



This lesson is about trying to be as healthy as we can be and living a happy, active

life. It describes the three dimensions of

health – physical, mental and social – and encourages reflection and discussion about our bodies, minds and emotions. It shows how developing good habits and making good personal choices can improve our health and well-being, while poor habits can harm it.

It also explains that not all factors affecting our health are under our personal control, and that efforts by both individuals and the community are necessary for achieving good health. The lesson encourages an evaluation of the basic local public services that affect people's health.



## Part 1

# The dimensions of health



### READING

Being in good health means more than just being free from illness or disease. While being physically healthy is the first step to good health, good mental health and social well-being are also necessary. In fact, health is defined by the World Health Organization as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. This means that to be in good health, we must take care of our bodies, our minds and emotions, and we must pay attention to our life-styles and surroundings. This definition of health recognizes that every person is complex and must be valued for all of their dimensions, not just for their physical ones. For example, people with a physical disability or illness can still continue to grow and improve mentally or socially, thus maintaining a good quality of life and contributing to the family and community. We have a chance to be in the best health when we are aware of all dimensions of good health and when we work toward improving ourselves in as many of them as we can.

#### TO THINK ABOUT WHILE READING



What does being healthy mean to you?

Is it enough to just be free from illness or disease to be in good health? Why or why not?

How can people improve their physical and mental health and their social well-being?

Are you aware of how your habits and personal choices affect your health and well-being?

There are many personal choices we can make to improve our physical, mental and social well-being. What we eat, how we live and the physical and social environment in which we live and work all affect our health. Achieving and maintaining the best possible overall health and well-being requires learning how to make good personal life-style choices and continuing these good practices throughout life. This means first of all making good food choices for a healthy and nutritious diet. It also means adopting behaviours that are beneficial to health, such as practising adequate levels of physical activity, and avoiding harmful behaviours such as smoking, drug and alcohol abuse and exposure to sexually transmitted diseases.

How we react to the challenges we face in life determines our mental health and happiness. Facing problems in a positive way, overcoming barriers, trying to make the best of a situation and seeking solutions all contribute to good mental health and well-being. The following saying suggests some positive attitudes for facing challenges and difficulties in life: “...have the serenity to accept the things we cannot change; the courage to change the things we can; and the wisdom to know the difference”.



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**Part 1**  
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Not all factors affecting our health are under our personal control. While we can control and be responsible for some of the important factors that affect our health, we do not always have control over all of them. Our health also depends on factors such as having good health services and medical care, public sanitation, a clean water supply, a safe and adequate food supply, job opportunities, good housing, good schools, peace and security, and recognition of our basic human rights.

Improvements in our health are best achieved and maintained by improving the personal choices we make as individuals and strengthening the efforts of the community to create a healthful environment and provide adequate public goods and services. Total health for an individual or a community is a combination of personal and public responsibility. While each person needs to learn how to make personal choices to ensure the very best health, the community needs to provide basic services that help protect or improve our health. Efforts by both the individual and the community are necessary for achieving improvements in overall health and well-being. People can contribute to improving their community services through volunteering, becoming involved in decisions that affect community services and being active in local community committees, citizen groups or political associations.



### MATERIALS

-  Work sheet *Proverbs and sayings about health*
-  Work sheet *Making a contribution despite health problems*
-  Work sheet *Personal choices affecting our health*
-  Example work sheet *Personal choices affecting our health*
-  Example work sheet *Basic public services*
-  Work sheet *Community services and people's health*
-  Into the field work sheet *How does your community rate?*



### ACTIVITIES

#### What do we mean by good health?

Reflect on what being healthy means to you. Write your ideas of health and well-being on a sheet of paper or on a board.

Then write out the WHO health definition: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or



infirmity”. Compare it to your responses and explore the concept of good health according to this definition. Were you able to think of responses for all three dimensions?

If working in a group or classroom setting, share your ideas and discuss.

## Sound mind in sound body

Health is so important for everyone that many cultures have proverbs and sayings defining health and highlighting its physical, spiritual and mental dimensions. For example, an ancient Roman poet once wrote that to be healthy we need to have a ‘sound mind in a sound body’ (*Mens sana in corpore sano*). What does this mean to you? Do you agree? How does this compare with the WHO definition?

Go to the *Proverbs and sayings about health* work sheet for more examples of popular proverbs and sayings. What do they mean to you? Do you agree with them?

Find and add to the list as many local proverbs, sayings and expressions relating to all dimensions of health and well-being as possible. You may also contribute some special expressions you often say or hear in your families. Compare the proverbs to the WHO health definition and identify which dimensions (our bodies, minds or emotions) are addressed in them.

## Being as healthy as possible in difficult life situations

Think about how to be as healthy as possible, even when things are difficult. Consider the following questions:

- Are sick people always sad?
- Do you know someone who has a health problem and yet is happy and active in the family or the community?
- What can we learn from these people?
- Could you be happy if you had an injury, disability or illness?
- How could you make the best of this situation?

Use the *Making a contribution despite health problems* work sheet to research and share with others the stories of people who have made important achievements and contributions to society despite their illnesses and disabilities. Examples may include world leaders who had health disorders, composers unable to hear their music, singers unable to see their instruments, the Paralympic Games athletes, disabled painters, scientists and others.

Think and add to the list people in your own family or community who have overcome physical or mental disabilities, humble beginnings or difficult circumstances and have made a contribution to the community or have had a positive influence on others.





## What personal choices affect our health?



Look at the blank work sheet *Personal choices affecting our health* individually or in small groups and think about the personal choices you make that can affect your health.

Name some things you can do that are healthful for each of the three dimensions and write them in the table. For example, some healthful choices may include: not smoking, being active, keeping the body clean, being relaxed, feeling good about oneself, making friends, helping others, and getting involved in the community.

Then add some behaviour choices that are harmful for the physical, mental and social dimensions. They may include: drug and alcohol abuse, eating poorly, lack of physical activity, being angry or sad, gossiping, hurting people, lying.



Now compare your ideas to the example work sheet *Personal choices affecting our health* and add as many suggestions as possible.

Looking at your work sheet, identify areas in which you feel you need to change or improve your behaviour in order to achieve better health. Choose one behaviour for each dimension and make an “agreement” with yourself on how you can improve.

## What community services affect health?



Make a list of community services that affect our physical, mental and social health but are not always under our personal control. Compare your ideas with the example list of *Basic public services*. Did you think of any services that are not on the list? Are there any services on the list that you didn't think of?

Then, individually or in groups, choose one or two basic services to further explore. Using information available from newspapers, magazines, radio, television, personal experience or any other sources available, describe some real situations happening anywhere in the world in which lack of community and public services affects people's health and well-being.



Fill in the Work sheet *Community services and people's health* with as much information as you can collect. Present and discuss the findings with your class, family, friends or others.

## How does your community rate?



Use the *How does your community rate* work sheet to evaluate the basic public services in your community that affect people's health and make suggestions for improvements. The evaluation can be done by interviewing knowledgeable people and experts in the community, such as local leaders, associations and community groups, health and social workers, religious leaders, elders, local authorities and government ministries. What opportunities do people have to influence decisions affecting their health? What can each of us do to help improve the public services?



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Prepare a report or a presentation for your school, family and community with the results of your analysis, suggestions for improvements and actions that can be taken. For example, if health care service is a problem, you might suggest community organization for transportation to hospitals or health centres or for bringing in medicines to families in need. If sanitation is a problem, you could identify the causes and indicate this to community leaders. If sufficient food is not available for everyone, you could suggest setting up food donations or food banks, community gardens, organizing transportation and facilities for food markets, or helping people get to food markets and shops.



### KEY POINTS

**Review these three key points** to remember about what it means to be in good health. Check your understanding of them and see how you can apply it to your own life.

### Good health and well-being

- Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not just the absence of disease or infirmity.
- Good health depends on making positive personal choices, including eating nourishing food, being physically active, and avoiding unhealthy habits, such as smoking, drug and alcohol abuse and risky sexual practice.
- Good health is best achieved through the combined efforts of the individual and the community which provides those services which help protect or improve health.





# Proverbs and sayings about health

How many proverbs, sayings or expressions about health do you know? List as many as you can think of.

*“Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”*

## Popular proverbs about health and well-being

- Sound mind in a sound body.
- Health is wealth.
- He who has health has hope, and he who has hope has everything.
- An apple a day keeps the doctor away.
- Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.

## Your proverbs and sayings

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# Making a contribution despite health problems

**Do you know someone who has overcome a physical or mental disability or difficult circumstances and has made a contribution to the community? List as many people as you know.**

## Some people who have made important contributions despite illness and disability

- American President **Franklin Roosevelt** was paralyzed from the waist down and sat in a wheelchair.
- German music composer, conductor and pianist **Ludwig Van Beethoven** was completely deaf.
- The great physicist and philosopher **Albert Einstein** was affected by dyslexia.
- Russian writer **Fedor Dostoevskij** had epilepsy (seizures or convulsions) throughout his life.
- Italian politician and social activist **Antonio Gramsci** had a spinal deformity (hunch back).
- American singer and song-writer **Stevie Wonder** has been blind since birth.

## People in your family and community who are active despite illness and disability

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# Personal choices affecting our health

How do your personal choices affect your health? List some things you can do that are healthful for your physical, mental or social well-being and some things that are harmful.

*“Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”*

**Healthful choices**

**Harmful choices**

**Physical health**

**Physical health**

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**Mental health**

**Mental health**

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**Social health**

**Social health**

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★ You can look for more information on Work sheet example **Personal choices affecting our health**

# Personal choices affecting our health

*“Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”*

## Healthful choices

### Physical health

- Not smoking, avoiding smoke
- Keeping the body clean
- Being active
- Eating a healthy balanced diet
- Getting proper care when sick

### Mental health

- Prayer and meditation
- Positive thinking
- Being cheerful and enthusiastic
- Being relaxed and reducing stress
- Feeling good about oneself
- Courage
- Forgiveness

### Social health

- Sharing with others
- Helping others
- Being kind, respecting others
- Making friends and being friendly
- Being responsible
- Joining social groups and clubs
- Being honest and sincere
- Volunteering
- Learning new skills
- Participating in the community

## Harmful choices

### Physical health

- Abuse of drugs and alcohol
- Smoking
- Eating poorly
- Unprotected sex
- Lack of physical activity or exercise

### Mental health

- Being bitter or angry
- Being irritated
- Holding a grudge
- Feeling hate
- Feeling fear
- Being anxious

### Social health

- Gossiping
- Fighting
- Having few friends
- Isolating yourself
- Being a bully
- Hurting people
- Lying and cheating
- Stealing



★ Reading this example work sheet will help you complete Work sheet Personal choices affecting our health

# Basic public services

- Health care services: hospitals, clinics, health centres, doctors and medicines, public vaccination programme for children
- Clean water supply
- Adequate food supply: food markets and shops
- System and laws to oversee and ensure food safety
- Provision of public sanitation: sewage system
- Rubbish collection and disposal facilities
- Building standards and safe housing construction
- Public housing, supported housing, rent control
- Employment opportunities, jobs and income
- Good public schools for all children
- Health education programmes for families
- Social support and protection for the old, the disabled, pregnant women, children and care-givers
- Clean environment: land, air and water
- Parks, gardens, playgrounds and sport facilities
- Places for people to meet and stay together
- Peace and security

## Examples of situations in which lack of public services affects people's health and well-being

- Shortage of hospitals, clinics, doctors, medicines, vaccines
- Problems with the supply of clean water
- Shortage of schools and teachers
- Few job opportunities
- Poor housing and living conditions
- Polluted land, air and water
- Inadequate food supplies and systems



★ Reading this example work sheet will help you complete Work sheet **Community services and people's health**



# Community services and people's health

Description of the situation	Impact on people's health	Solutions	Lessons learnt
<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

**Find out more about the basic services in your community.**

**Choose 1 or 2 services to investigate and fill in this table with as much information as possible.**

**Your findings should include:**

- Description of the situation.** What basic public services are not provided in the community? Why are they not provided? Who takes decisions about the provision of these services?
- The impact on people's health.** How does the lack of basic public services affect people's health and well-being?

**3) Solutions.** Has the problem been solved? How? Who has taken action to resolve the situation? Are there any other ways to improve these public services?

**4) Lessons learnt.** What have you learned from this situation that can be useful in your own community?



**You can look for more information on**

**Basic public services**

Work sheet example



# How does your community rate?

**Interview knowledgeable people and experts in the community, such as local leaders, associations and community groups, health and social workers, religious leaders, elders, local authorities and government ministries.**

What opportunities do people have to influence decisions affecting their health? What can each of us do to help improve the public services?

**Prepare a report or presentation with the results of your analysis, suggestions for improvements and actions that can be taken.**

For example, if health care service is a problem, you might suggest community organization for transportation to hospitals or health centres or for bringing in medicines to families in need.

If sufficient food is not available for everyone, you might suggest setting up food donations or food banks, community gardens, organizing transportation and facilities for food markets, or helping people get to food markets and shops.

**Your interview should include:**

1. identifying any problems in the provision of public services;
2. understanding how these problems affect people's health;
3. evaluating or rating the basic services in the community;
4. making suggestions for actions to improve the situation through efforts by both individuals and the community.

**Examples of the interview questions:**

- What kind of ..... is provided in your community? (Add a public service from the list "Basic public services")
- Is it good? Poor? So so?
- How would you "rate" the provision of this basic service?
- What are some of the problems?
- How do these problems affect people's health?
- How could this public service be improved?
- What are some of the difficulties in improving it?
- How could improvement in this public service have a positive effect on people's health?
- Who should be taking action to improve this public service in your community?



