

Public health issues

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What is the Public Health?

- Public health is defined as the science of protecting the safety and improving the health of communities through education, policy making and research for disease and injury prevention.
- It is the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting physical and mental health, sanitation, personal hygiene, control of infectious diseases, and organization of health services

Role of public health issue

- Public health promotes the welfare of the entire population, ensures its security and protects it from the spread of infectious disease and environmental hazards, and helps to ensure access to safe and quality care to benefit the population.
- A public health problem, therefore, is a medical issue that affects a significant portion of a specific population. Some examples include chronic illnesses like Type 2 diabetes, infectious diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis, mental health challenges, and even motor vehicle accidents.

Top 10 Public Health Challenges

- Physical Activity and Nutrition
- Overweight and Obesity
- Tobacco
- Substance Abuse
- HIV/AIDS
- Mental Health
- Injury and Violence
- Environmental Quality
- Immunization
- Access to Health Care

Physical Activity and Nutrition

- Research indicates that staying physically active can help prevent or delay certain diseases, including some cancers, heart disease and diabetes, and also relieve depression and improve mood. Inactivity often accompanies advancing age, but it doesn't have to. Check with your local churches or synagogues, senior centers, and shopping malls for exercise and walking programs. Like exercise, your eating

habits are often not good if you live and eat alone. It's important for successful aging to eat foods rich in nutrients and avoid the empty calories in candy and sweets.

Overweight and Obesity

- Being overweight or obese increases your chances of dying from hypertension, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, respiratory problems, dyslipidemia and endometrial, breast, prostate, and colon cancers. In-depth guides and practical advice about obesity are available from the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute of the National Institute of Health

Tobacco

- Tobacco is the single greatest preventable cause of illness and premature death in the U.S. Tobacco use is now called "Tobacco dependence disease." The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) says that smokers who try to quit are more successful when they have the support of their physician.

Substance Abuse

- Substance abuse usually means drugs and alcohol. These are two areas we don't often associate with seniors, but seniors, like young people, may self-medicate using legal and illegal drugs and alcohol, which can lead to serious health consequences. In addition, seniors may deliberately or unknowingly mix medications and use alcohol. Because of our stereotypes about senior citizens, many medical people fail to ask seniors about possible substance abuse.

HIV/AIDS

- Between 11 and 15% of U.S. AIDS cases occur in seniors over age 50. Between 1991 and 1996, AIDS in adults over 50 rose more than twice as fast as in younger adults. Seniors are unlikely to use condoms, have immune systems that naturally weaken with age, and HIV symptoms (fatigue, weight loss, dementia, skin rashes, swollen lymph nodes) are similar to symptoms that can accompany old age. Again, stereotypes about aging in terms of sexual activity and drug use keep this problem largely unrecognized. That's why seniors are not well represented in research, clinical drug trials, prevention programs and efforts at intervention.

Mental Health

- Dementia is not part of aging. Dementia can be caused by disease, reactions to medications, vision and hearing problems, infections, nutritional imbalances, diabetes, and renal failure. There are many forms of dementia (including Alzheimer's Disease) and some can be temporary. With

accurate diagnosis comes management and help. The most common late-in-life mental health condition is depression. If left untreated, depression in the elderly can lead to suicide. Here's a surprising fact: The rate of suicide is higher for elderly white men than for any other age group, including adolescents.

Injury and Violence

- Among seniors, falls are the leading cause of injuries, hospital admissions for trauma, and deaths due to injury. One in every three seniors (age 65 and older) will fall each year. Strategies to reduce injury include exercises to improve balance and strength and medication review. [Home modifications](#) can help reduce injury. Home security is needed to prevent intrusion. Home-based fire prevention devices should be in place and easy to use. People aged 65 and older are twice as likely to die in a home fire as the general population.

Environmental Quality

- Even though pollution affects all of us, government studies have indicated that low-income, racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to live in areas where they face environmental risks. Compared to the general population, a higher proportion of elderly are living just over the poverty threshold.

Immunization

- Influenza and pneumonia are among the top 10 causes of death for older adults. Emphasis on Influenza vaccination for seniors has helped. Pneumonia remains one of the most serious infections, especially among women and the very old.

Access to Health Care

- Seniors frequently don't monitor their health as seriously as they should. While a shortage of geriatricians has been noted nationwide, UPMC has one of the largest groups of geriatricians and geriatric specialists of any medical community in the country. Your access to health care is as close as UPMC, offering a menu of services at several hospital settings, including the VA Hospital in Canandaigua, in senior housing, and in *your* community.

Public Health helps detect health issues as early as possible and responds appropriately to avoid the development of disease.

How it can be prevent?

- ❖ **Be a non-smoker and avoid second hand smoke.**
- ❖ **Be physically active everyday.**
- ❖ **Eat healthy foods.**
- ❖ **Achieve a healthy weight.**
- ❖ **Control your blood pressure.**

- ❖ Limit your intake of alcohol.
- ❖ Reduce your stress.
- ❖ Be screened or tested regularly.

Making changes takes time and effort

It's not easy to make a major lifestyle change. It takes time to form new habits. By understanding the stages of change, starting small and setting realistic goals, we can learn to make healthier choices and in the process, reduce your risk for chronic disease.

***“To keep the body in good health is a duty...otherwise we shall not be able to keep the mind strong and clear.”
– Buddha***