

## SUMMARY

This chapter has defined health behaviour as those behaviours associated with health status, whether or not they are performed with the explicit goal of health protection, promotion or maintenance in mind. The behaviours addressed in this chapter are sometimes referred to as 'behavioural pathogens' or health-risk behaviour and include smoking, heavy consumption of alcohol, unprotected sexual behaviour and an unhealthy diet. 'Behavioural immunogens' or health-enhancing behaviours, such as exercise, a balanced diet, health screening and immunisation behaviours, are discussed in the next chapter.

This chapter has described behaviours with clear associations with prevalent illnesses, and as such

they account for a vast amount of research enquiry within health psychology. A significant body of work has addressed the complexity of social, emotional and cognitive factors that contribute to the uptake and maintenance of health-damaging behaviour, and a range of theories and models of health behaviour which have been developed and tested are described in Chapter 5.

We concluded this chapter by bringing to the reader's attention some of the challenges to effective measurement of health behaviours and, as elsewhere in this text, we encourage readers to stop and think about the data on which a lot of the evidence we review is built, and to do this they may need some further individual reading.

## Further reading

Knott, C.S., Coombs, N., Stamatakis, E., and Biddolph, J.P. (2015). All-cause mortality and the case for age-specific alcohol consumption guidelines: pooled analyses of up to 10 population based cohorts, *British Medical Journal*; 350 doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.h384>

A recent and important review of the different effects of alcohol by age, with calls for age-specific alcohol guidelines. It will be interesting to see whether these emerge.

West, R (2006). *Theory of Addiction*. Oxford, Blackwell.

Reading this as well as the above book by Knott et al. will give the interested reader an excellent and up-to-date grasp of both psychological and social models of addiction.

*The World Drugs Report 2014*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Vienna.

This report provides useful and up-to-date statistics regarding the health-risk behaviours reported in this chapter, particularly with regards to illicit substances. Other than making

recommendations for individual behaviour change, the report focuses on global strategies to reduce drug production and trafficking.

For a useful overview of current Department of Health survey statistics pertaining to health behaviour and illness (UK): [www.doh.gov.uk/stats](http://www.doh.gov.uk/stats)

For a copy of the recent UK survey of adolescent health and health behaviour, including recommendations for interventions: [www.bma.org.uk](http://www.bma.org.uk)

For information about the HPV vaccination programme, look at this website. It offers a health encyclopaedia to members of the public in order to provide up-to-date information about health conditions and their treatments: [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/articles/article.aspx?articleId=2336](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/articles/article.aspx?articleId=2336)

For a downloadable report of UK statistics (up to 2012) relating to heart disease, including behavioural and medical risk factors see: <http://www.bhf.org.uk/publications/view-publication.aspx?ps=1002097>

For information regarding worldwide HIV and AIDS figures, campaigns and news: <http://www.avert.org/>



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