

SECTION

6

HEALTH AND
WELLNESS



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH

Health and Wellness

INTRODUCTION

Health and wellness are essential components for every human being because they help us to live a balanced life and appreciate how to improve our overall quality of life. In this section, you will be guided to identify, explain, describe, role-play and apply the knowledge of Health and Wellness in your daily lives. You will be able to take better care of your health and improve your general well-being.

We will identify and explain the determinants of health and how these components contribute to health. We will also learn about the wellness continuum and discuss the barriers to accessing health services. Be ready to share your experiences so we can learn from and support each other in our better health for all journeys.

At the end of this section, you will be able to

- Identify and explain the determinants of health.
- Describe the illness wellness continuum and discuss the barriers to accessing health services.

Key Ideas:

- Health is the overall physical, mental, and social condition of a person.
- Wellness is a state of being healthy, happy, and content.
- Well-being a state of being comfortable, healthy, and happy.
- Health, wellness and well-being can be influenced by many factors.
- A Determinant is a factor that determines or influences the outcome of something. Determinants of health are things that make people sick, healthy or vulnerable to ill health.
- Health is not static, meaning it can move from good to bad and from bad to good which is referred to as the health continuum or illness-wellness continuum.

DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

What Influences Health?

Health is influenced by many factors, which are commonly organised into four broad categories termed determinants of health.

a. Determinants of Health

Determinants of health are things or factors that make people healthy, sick or vulnerable to ill health. They are things around and within you that positively or negatively influence your health. Some determinants that affect health can be changed and others cannot or are very difficult to change. Those that can be changed or controlled are called **modifiable determinants** while those that cannot be changed are referred to as **non-modifiable determinants**. Understanding modifiable and non-modifiable determinants of health is essential for you to know the factors that contribute to your healthy and sick status.

- i. **Modifiable determinants:** Modifiable determinants of health refer to factors or influences on health that can be changed through individual or collective actions. These determinants play a very important role in shaping your health and can be altered through various interventions, policies, behaviours and environmental changes.
- ii. **Non-modifiable determinants:** Non-modifiable determinants of health are factors or characteristics that cannot be changed or altered through individual or collective actions. These determinants can have a significant influence on your health. Unlike modifiable determinants, which can be influenced through interventions or changes in behaviour, non-modifiable determinants remain constant throughout a person's life.



Fig. 6.1: Non-modifiable determinants of health

Some examples of non-modifiable determinants of health include:

- **Genetics and Biology:** Biological and genetic factors are conditions inherited from parents or family members. These genetic tendencies and biological factors inherited, play a critical role in determining an individual's health status.

The following are examples of hereditary conditions:

- **Haemophilia:** delayed clotting of blood with prolonged or excessive internal or external bleeding after injury or surgery
- **Cystic fibrosis:** a progressive hereditary disease of the exocrine gland that leads to shortness of breath, persistent cough, chronic respiratory infection and poor growth
- **Sickle-cell anaemia:** an inherited blood disorder that prevents red blood cells from carrying oxygen to parts of the body by blocking small blood vessels,

causing painful and damaging complications to the individual. Sickle cell disease is a very common example of a genetic determinant of health. Sickle cell is a condition that people inherit when both parents carry the gene for sickle cell.

All of these are likely to negatively impact the health of an individual.

- **Age:** Age is a non-modifiable determinant that affects the health of people. As individuals age, they may become more vulnerable to certain health conditions and diseases due to physiological changes in the body. While healthy behaviours can lessen some age-related risks, ageing itself cannot be changed.
- **Sex and Gender:** Biological sex and gender identity influence health outcomes in various ways. For example, certain health conditions may affect one sex or gender more than the other due to hormonal differences or bodily differences.

Examples include prostate cancer and erectile dysfunction in males and uterine fibroid, ovarian and cervical cancer in females. While self-care and interventions can support individuals' health needs, sex and gender identity themselves are non-modifiable.

- **Family History:** A family history of certain diseases or health conditions can increase an individual's risk of developing similar conditions. While family history provides valuable information for preventive measures to delay the onset or avoid developing the health conditions, the tendency of developing the condition cannot be changed. For example, a family history of cancer makes individuals in that family more likely to develop the condition.
- **Ethnicity and Race:** Ethnicity and race can influence the health of individuals through various socio-cultural and genetic factors. Health differences based on ethnicity and race highlight general issues that may require broader societal changes, but ethnicity and race themselves are non-modifiable characteristics.

b. Categories of Determinants of Health

The modifiable and the non-modifiable determinants have been grouped into four categories. These are:

- lifestyle or behavioural determinants
- biological determinants
- social determinants
- environmental determinants.



Fig. 6.2: The four categories of determinants of health

- i. Lifestyle or behavioural determinants:** This refers to individual behaviours that shape and play a role in reducing or increasing the rates of both chronic and infectious diseases in their lives and communities.
- ii. Biological determinants:** This consists of inherited health conditions, hormone levels, body structure, eye colour and some mental or psychological characteristics from parents and relations that can predispose individuals to ill-health.

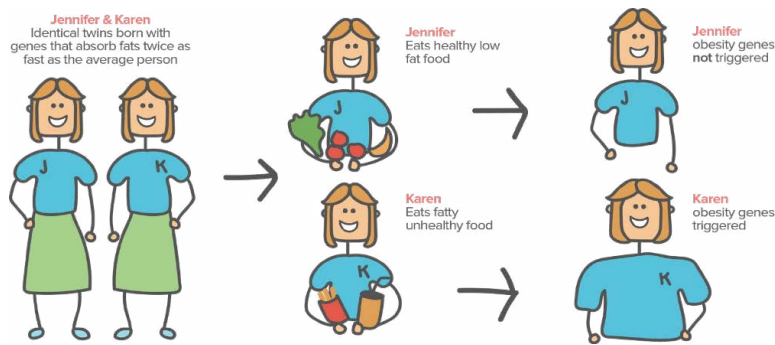


Fig. 6.3: Transfer of genetic health traits to offsprings

- iii. Social determinants:** The social determinants of health refer to the non-medical factors that influence the health of people. These non-medical factors are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live and age, and the wider set of environments and systems shaping the conditions of people’s daily lives. The environment and systems include economic policies and systems, social norms, social policies, political systems, working conditions, education, health care system and others.



Fig. 6.4: Social determinants of health

- iv. Environmental determinants:** This determinant is made up of two aspects called the natural and the built environmental determinants of health. These are the natural and built resources that are important for or affect the health and well-being of individuals and communities.

Examples include:

- **Natural environment:**
 - adequate amounts of fresh and uncontaminated water

- clean air
- healthy workplaces
- access to nature or green space, such as trees, lawns, parks and flowers
- fertile soil to grow food and other plants
- materials to construct shelter
- a stable climate with temperatures conducive to sustaining life.



Fig. 6.5: *Natural environment*

- **Built environment**

Built environments include structures such as:

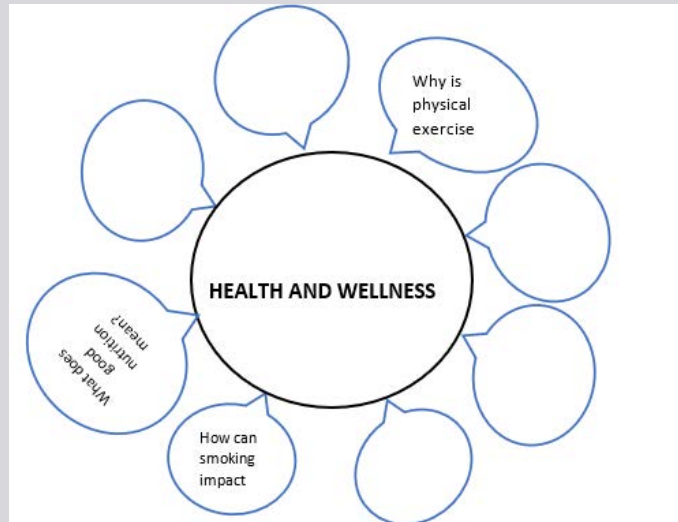
- commercial buildings
- roads
- walkways
- worksites
- schools
- recreational settings
- homes and neighbourhoods
- physical barriers, especially for people with disabilities
- aesthetic elements such as good lighting, etc.



Fig. 6.6: Built environment

Activity 6.1

- A. Complete the cut-out cards with questions related to health and wellness based on your knowledge from the previous lesson on (health and wellness part one)



- B. Place the designed question cards in a box and pick one of the cards without looking into the box.
C. Select a question and read it to your group for them to answer.
D. Make a note of the questions and answers below:

- E. Write down five (5) health conditions that are common within your family or other families, you know.

Health Conditions

Activity 6.2

In a group, search the internet or use other available resources to do the following:

- a. Create a definition for ‘determinants of health’ that all of your group agrees on.
- b. Discuss three factors of determinants of health. Give an example of each in everyday life.
- c. What is the difference between a modifiable and non-modifiable determinant of health. Don’t forget to give an example of each.
- d. As a group, share your findings with your class.

Activity 6.3

In your group, make a pictorial representation of two modifiable determinants of health and their impact on society.

Share your completed work with your colleagues.

Activity 6.4

Write a two-page article on natural and built environment determinants of health for your school magazine.

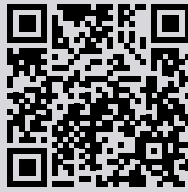
Share your article with your teacher who will give you feedback.

Time to reflect

Take time to reflect on the determinants of health. Based on these determinants, what changes will you make to your lifestyle to improve your health?

Now that we’ve learnt about the determinants of health, let’s look at the Illness and Wellness Continuum and barriers to accessing health services

Click the link below to watch a video on illness-wellness continuum.



https://youtu.be/IMgeNYktqEk?si=Dkl_A-z4pYaqVj1k

ILLNESS WELLNESS CONTINUUM AND BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HEALTH SERVICES

Health is not static, meaning it can move from good to bad and from bad to good which is referred to as the health continuum or illness-wellness continuum.

To achieve high levels of wellness, an individual must move increasingly higher on the continuum of a positive lifestyle. Individuals who fail to achieve these levels may slip into ill health or diseases, leading to a declining quality of life and premature disability or death.

The illness-wellness continuum is a range of wellness states from premature death to optimum wellness. It is a pictorial of well-being that integrates or incorporates all domains of health and fitness. It indicates that there are actually many degrees of wellness, just as there are many degrees of illness. An individual can move beyond the ‘neutral’ point to increasingly higher levels of wellness or worse levels of ill health.



Moving from the centre to the left shows a progressively worsening state of health. Moving to the right from the centre indicates increasing levels of health and well-being.

The wellness example directs individuals beyond the neutral point and encourages them to move as far towards wellness as possible.

Even though people often lack physical symptoms, they may still be bored, depressed, tense, anxious or simply unhappy with their lives. Such emotional states often set the

stage for physical and mental diseases. High level of wellness simply defines choices people make over things they can control in their lives.

The Importance of Health and Wellness in Everyday Life

- i. Reduces stress
- ii. Prevent diseases
- iii. Prevent disease
- iv. Improves self confidence
- v. Enhances productivity
- vi. Enhances teamwork and social networks.
- vii. Reduces absenteeism in school and workplace.

Source: (Orane International, 2023; Somya, 2023)

The main principle of the illness-wellness continuum is that you can move farther to the right, towards greater health and well-being, passing through the stages of awareness, education and growth. The continuum supports health professionals to educate people on the importance and the ways of monitoring and improving their health on a daily basis.

Health Care or Services

Health care or services is the improvement of health through prevention, diagnosis, treatment, enhancement or cure of diseases, illness, injury and other physical and mental impairments in people.

Health care or services is delivered by health care professionals and associated health fields. Health care includes work done in providing primary care, secondary care and tertiary care to people in various communities around the world.

- i. **Primary care:** Primary health care or services are the day-to-day general health assistance given by healthcare providers that cover a variety of prevention, wellness and treatment for common illnesses.



Fig. 6.7: A community health worker offering ante-natal care service

- ii. **Secondary care:** This is health care given to people by someone who has more specific expertise or specialisation about a particular health condition.

Examples of medical situations needing secondary care services include cancer treatment, medical care for pneumonia, heart disease and other severe, sudden infections and care for fractures, etc.



Fig. 6.8: Treating a patient with a fracture

- iii. **Tertiary care:** This is a specialised care delivered in a hospital or similar care setting. It usually requires a referral from a primary or secondary care provider and it is typically only available at specialised medical centres such as teaching hospitals. Tertiary care can include a range of procedures from cancer treatment to organ (heart, liver, kidney, lungs, etc.) transplantation.



Fig. 6.9: Ridge Hospital

Barriers to Accessing Health Care or Services

Both access to health care or services and the quality of health services can impact health.

For example, when individuals do not have health insurance, they may be less likely to participate in preventive care and are more likely to delay medical treatment or seek medical treatment due to lack of money.

Barriers include:

- i. Non-availability of health posts in communities
- ii. Inaccessibility to health posts due to where they are located (distance and poor road network)
- iii. Attitudes of health personnel
- iv. High cost of services
- v. Lack of insurance coverage
- vi. Limited language access (personnel in some communities do not understand and cannot speak the local language of the local people, leading to gaps in communication between the patients and the healthcare personnel).

Activity 6.5

Identify the components of the illness-wellness continuum. Make notes or draw the continuum below.

Activity 6.6

In a group, explain the illness-wellness continuum and analyse its components.

- Write down at least ten (10) scenarios depicting both ends of a continuum (premature death and optimal wellness).

Example scenarios:

Optimal wellness - A person who exercises daily and eats a balanced diet.

Premature death - A person who smokes and has high blood pressure but doesn't seek medical help.

- Draw the continuum line drawn on the floor. Label one end 'Premature Death' and the other end "Optimal Wellness").
- Listen attentively to your colleagues on the scenarios identified above. Stand at the point on the continuum that you think represents the person's position based on the scenario.
- Discuss each scenario as a class, justify your position based on the scenario and adjust your placements if needed.

Activity 6.7

Barriers to Healthcare Role-Play

In your group, select one of the following barriers to health: Distance, Cost, Lack of insurance, Language etc.,

- Create a short skit or role-play scenario that demonstrates the barrier in action. For example, a group or an individual might portray a patient struggling to get treatment due to high cost or a language barrier.
- Discuss the barrier portrayed in class, remember to include its impact on health outcomes, and potential solutions.

Note: make use of props, costumes, or visual aids.

Activity 6.8

Debate

Topic: "Is the lack of healthcare facilities the biggest barrier to wellness in Ghana?"

Research using the internet or school library on the "pros and cons" of the above debate topic.

Have a mini group discussion to explore the complexities of healthcare access and how it relates to the illness-wellness continuum.

Prepare your arguments either for or against the motion and present it in class.

Express your opinions, ask questions, and consider different perspectives of the topic.

Use the space below to make notes:

Review Questions

1. Case Study/Scenario:

Sarah comes from a family with a history of high blood pressure. Although she exercises regularly and eats a balanced diet, she has been diagnosed with high blood pressure at the age of 35. Identify and explain the types of determinants of health influencing Sarah's condition. What could Sarah do to manage her health effectively?

2. Solve the following riddles:

- i. "I am something you cannot change, passed down from your parents, but I can shape your health in ways you cannot control. What am I?"
- ii. "I'm something that changes as you grow older, making you more vulnerable to certain conditions. Though you can't stop me, healthy habits might help you cope with what I bring. What am I?"
- iii. "I am a scale that measures your health from the worst to the best, showing that every choice you make affects your wellness. What am I?"
- iv. "I am a challenge many face when trying to see a doctor. Sometimes it's because of money, sometimes because of distance. What am I?"

3. Consider the following two individuals:

- a. Person A: Lives in a polluted city, works long hours with high stress, and does not have access to fresh foods.
- b. Person B: Lives in a clean rural area, works a physically active job, and eats fresh fruits and vegetables daily.

Compare and contrast the modifiable and non-modifiable determinants of health affecting both individuals. How might their different environments influence their overall health?

4. Write an essay explaining the difference between modifiable and non-modifiable determinants of health. Provide examples of each and discuss how understanding these determinants can help in making informed health decisions.
5. Complete the table below by filling in the correct examples under the appropriate categories:

Category of Determinant	Example
Modifiable Determinant	Diet
Non-Modifiable Determinant	

6. Ali is a 45-year-old man who lives in a remote village. Although he experiences symptoms of high blood pressure, he has not visited a healthcare facility due to the distance, lack of transportation, and high cost of services. Using the illness-

wellness continuum, analyse Ali's situation and discuss the barriers that prevent him from accessing health services. Suggest possible ways to overcome these barriers.

7. Write an essay explaining the illness-wellness continuum and its importance in everyday life. Discuss how understanding this continuum can help individuals make informed decisions about their health. Include examples of barriers to accessing health services in Ghana and propose strategies to address these barriers.
8. Complete the table below by filling in the correct examples under the appropriate categories related to the illness-wellness continuum:

Component of the Illness-Wellness Continuum	Example
Awareness	Understanding the need for regular exercise.
Prevention	
	Regularly engaging in physical activities.

9. Identify and explain five components of the illness-wellness continuum and briefly explain each.
10. Describe four (4) barriers to accessing health services in Ghana and discuss their impact on health outcomes.
 - Awareness: Recognising the importance of health and the factors that affect it.
 - Education: Learning about health-related topics and how to maintain or improve health.
 - Growth: Applying knowledge and making lifestyle changes that promote health.
 - Prevention: Taking steps to avoid illness or injury, such as vaccinations and healthy habits.
 - High-Level Wellness: Achieving and maintaining a state of optimal health through ongoing healthy behaviours.

Extended Reading

Use the links to further access information on health and wellness.

1. [Social Determinants of Health | HIMSS](<https://www.himss.org/resources/social-determinants-health>)
2. [Home - Wellness, self-care and mental health awareness reading list - Research Guides at University of Minnesota Minneapolis](<https://libguides.umn.edu/c.php?g=1306062>)
3. [Social Determinant of Health: Education Is Crucial](<https://publichealth.tulane.edu/blog/social-determinant-of-health->
4. The Meaning of Wellness <https://youtu.be/MxX6ht3EbOY?si=4D412CDaF4c7RrrG>
5. "Social Theory & Health" - The article "Healing Health Care: From Sick Care Towards Salutogenic Healing Systems"
6. [New Perspectives on the Illness-Wellness Continuum](<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/new-perspectives-illness-wellness-continuum-matthew-critchlow>)
7. [Healing Health Care: From Sick Care Towards Salutogenic Healing Systems | Social Theory & Health](<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41285-019-00103-2>)
8. [Workplace Wellness: From Resiliency to Suicide Prevention and Grief Management: A Practical Guide to Supporting Healthcare Professionals | SpringerLink](<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-16983-0>)

References

1. Panda. (2024, January 17). Illness-Wellness Continuum: Definition and Importance.
2. <https://ivypanada.com/essays/illness-wellness-continuum-definition-and-importance/>
3. Oliver, M. D., Baldwin, D. R., & Datta, S. (2018). Health to wellness: A review of wellness models and transitioning back to health. *The International Journal of Health, Wellness, and Society*, 9(1), 41-56. Web.

GLOSSARY

Barriers	an obstacle that prevents movement or access.
Cervical cancer	is cancer that starts in the cells of the cervix. The cervix is the lower, narrow end of the uterus (womb).
Chronic	persisting for a long time or constantly recurring.
Critical	very important.
Determinant	a factor which decisively affects the nature or outcome of something.
Dysfunction	abnormality or impairment in the operation of a specified bodily organ or system.
Erectile	able to become erect.
Exocrine gland	a gland that makes substances such as sweat, tears, saliva, milk, and digestive juices, and releases them through a duct or opening to a body surface.
Genetic	the study of how genes and how traits are passed down from one generation to the next.
Gland	An organ that makes one or more substances, such as hormones, digestive juices, sweat, tears, saliva, or milk.
Haemophilia	an inherited bleeding disorder, which means it can be passed on from birth parents to their children. If you have haemophilia, your blood doesn't clot properly, which makes it difficult to control bleeding.
Hereditary	genetically passed or capable of being passed from parent to offspring.
Hormones	are chemical substances that act like messenger molecules in the body. After being made in one part of the body, they travel to other parts of the body where they help control how cells and organs do their work.
Influence	the capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behaviour of someone or something, or the effect itself.
Interventions	The act of interfering with the outcome or course especially of a condition or process (as to prevent harm or improve functioning)
Modifiable	capable of being changed.
Modification	is a change or alteration, usually to make something work better.
Non-modifiable	risk factors cannot be changed or controlled.
Physiological	relating to the way in which a living organism or bodily part functions
Sickle cell	red blood cells become crescent- or "sickle"-shaped due to a genetic mutation.
Tendency	is an inclination to do something.
Vulnerable	To be exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally.
Illness	feeling sick or unwell.

Continuum	a gradual range or scale without clear divisions.
Disease	a condition that harms the body or mind.
Disability	a physical or mental condition that limits activities.
Poor Health	not feeling well or being unhealthy.
Neutral Health	neither sick nor particularly healthy; average health.
Good Health	feeling well and strong.
Optimal Health	the best possible state of health.

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