

Factors that influence health (social determinants of health)



A. Income and income distribution

This is the total amount of money that a family makes each month. It is all the money they have to pay for necessities (like food) or other expenses (like a phone or a car).

B. Social support networks

This includes all of your relatives, friends, immediate and extended family, who you can talk to whether you are having a good day or a bad day.

C. Education, literacy, and skills

An education provides us with the necessary skills that are needed to develop into a healthy adult. Some of these skills include reading, writing, and mathematical skills. These skills are important for achieving a higher level of education and succeeding through life.

D. Employment, job security, and working conditions

Employment and work provides adults with a source of income to support themselves and their family. Safe and healthy working conditions are important for health and well-being. These conditions are also important so adults can continue to stay employed.

E. Physical environments

People need safe places to live, work, and play. It is also easier to live a healthy life when we live close to things like playgrounds, walking trails, bike paths, and stores that offer affordable (not expensive), healthy foods.

F. Social inclusion or exclusion

Individuals who are prevented from having regular and equal access to (being able to have) opportunities or resources that other individuals in society typically have, such as employment, housing, access to services. Individuals may be excluded (left out) because of characteristics including their race, religion, gender, age, education, income, or disability.

G. Personal health practices and resiliency

Personal health practices include things that you can do when you face stressors or challenges in life. Resiliency is having the ability to adapt and recover from stress or challenges. Resiliency is being able to handle bad things that happen and return back to feeling like your regular self.

H. Sexual orientation and attraction

Sexual orientation is often used to describe different types of sexual attraction. Sexual orientation can also refer to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviours, and membership in a community of others who share those attractions.¹ There are several types of sexual orientation, for example, heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual.²

I. Early childhood development

Healthy child development influences well-being and reading, writing, and mathematical skills. Places such as daycare, provide toddlers and children with an enriched (better) learning experience which is needed for healthy development.

J. Food insecurity

Food is a basic human need. Having access to (being able to get) healthy food helps us to get the right nutrients for our bodies to grow and develop in a healthy way.

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**K. Access to health services**

These include doctor visits, clinics, emergency services, hospital care, and required medications. While these services are very important and necessary, it is also important to prevent (to stop) people from becoming sick in the first place by helping them to stay healthy.

L. Gender identity and expression

Internal and individual experience of gender is your feeling of being a boy, a girl, both, neither, or somewhere else along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as, or different from the sex they were assigned at birth.³ While gender identity is internal, gender expression is how a person publicly presents their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as how someone dresses, wears their hair, if they use make-up, their body language, and their voice. A person's chosen name and pronoun are also common ways of expressing gender.⁴

M. Culture, race, and ethnicity

Cultural norms and practices (a person's way of life) can affect health behaviours. Sometimes people are not made to feel welcome because of their culture or where they are from. When people are encouraged to practise their culture the way they want to—through religion, language, or foods—they are healthier and happier.

N. Disability

All individuals, whether they live with or without a disability must have opportunities to take part in meaningful daily activities that add to their growth, development, and wellness.⁵

O. Housing

Safe and affordable (not expensive) housing is important for good health. Good housing means having a home that is affordable, secure, safe, in good repair, and free from infestation and mold.⁶

P. Indigenous status

The health of Indigenous peoples in Canada is largely linked to the history of colonization⁷ as well as ongoing racism, discrimination, and oppression. Being treated less than others because of Indigenous status can lead to feelings such as stress, sadness, anger, and more. These experiences can lead to illness later in life.

Adapted from There's More to Poverty than Meets the Eye, Poverty Education Resource, 2014, Saskatoon Health Region.

¹ Sex & U. Sexual Orientation. Retrieved from <https://www.sexandu.ca/lgbttq/sexual-orientation/>

² Nemours TeensHealth. Sexual Attraction and Orientation. Retrieved from <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/sexual-orientation.html>

³ Sex & U. Gender Identity. Retrieved from <https://www.sexandu.ca/lgbttq/%20gender-identity/>

⁴ Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights. Important Definitions. Retrieved from <https://www.actioncanadashr.org/resources/sexual-health-info/hub/important-definitions>

⁵ Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Healthy People 2020: Disability and Health. Retrieved from: <https://wayback.archive-it.org/5774/20220413202458/https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/disability-and-health>.

⁶ Public Health Sudbury & Districts. Circles interactive story map. Retrieved from <https://www.phsd.ca/health-topics-programs/health-equity/a-community-approach-to-poverty-reduction/>.

⁷ Loppie, C., & Wein, F. (2022). Understanding Indigenous health inequalities through a social determinants model. National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health. Retrieved from https://www.nccih.ca/495/Understanding_Indigenous_Health_Inequalities_through_a_Social_Determinants_Model.nccih?id=10373

Matching social determinants of health



Match the example situation with the social determinant of health. Write the social determinant of health letter below the example situation.

Your parents/family members work in a safe workplace.

You have a safe home to rest, sleep, eat, play, and grow in.

You learned something new from a classmate about their religion, traditions, or the country that their family is from.

When you are stressed out about school, you often take a walk to clear your head.

You have family members and friends you feel close to and who you can rely on.

When you were younger, you went to places like preschool or daycare.

You and/or your caregivers have money to be able to enjoy activities with friends.

You have enough healthy food to eat at each meal.

You have a safe playground in your neighbourhood.

You are able to read and understand health information that you hear on TV or read online.

You have a family doctor that knows you and your health history.

You identify as an Indigenous person living in Canada.

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Your parents/family members work in a safe workplace. D Employment, job security, and working conditions	You have a safe home to rest, sleep, eat, play, and grow in. O Housing	You learned something new from a classmate about their religion, traditions, or the country that their family is from. M Culture, race, and ethnicity
When you are stressed out about school, you often take a walk to clear your head. G Personal health practices and resiliency	You have family members and friends you feel close to and who you can rely on. B Social support networks	When you were younger, you went to places like preschool or daycare. I Early childhood development
You and/or your caregivers have money to be able to enjoy activities with friends. A Income and income distribution	You have enough healthy food to eat at each meal. J Food insecurity	You have a safe playground in your neighbourhood. E Physical environments
You are able to read and understand health information that you hear on TV or read online. C Education, literacy, and skills	You have a family doctor that knows you and your health history. K Access to health services	You identify as an Indigenous person living in Canada. P Indigenous status

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