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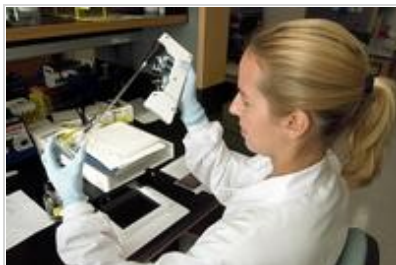
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Health

Listen

American Accent

Health is an encompassing term describing the functional efficiency or soundness of an organism. It is usually applied to the physical and mental state, but health is also used in a social context to describe the state of an environment and public health. The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) argues that health is more than the absence of infirmity or disease. There are health checklists such as the International Classification of Functioning (ICF), which measures disability and health, and the worldwide popular [International Classification of Diseases](#) (ICD) that defines and measures components of health. Health status is one measure of a nation's level of achievement, that is, the degree to which its citizens are of sound body, mind, and spirit. Health determinants include lifestyle measures, environmental factors, biomedical aspects, and more recently the role of genetics.



A microbiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Meningitis and Special Pathogens Branch runs a pulsed-field gel electrophoresis analytical test, a technique used in the typing of bacterial

Background

Archaeologists and [anthropologists](#) are convinced prehistoric people used herbs and plants to improve their health. In Greek mythology, good health was thought a gift from the gods, and a link to peace and security. Ill health was a punishment. The ancient Greeks introduced [medical diagnosis](#), [prognosis](#), treatments, and ethics, designing an early health-care system. Maintaining good health initially focused on personal care or lifestyle—such as monitoring one's diet, limiting alcohol and drug use, and maintaining a normal weight. By the twelfth

organisms. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services under President Barack Obama. White House photo

century, the renowned physician [Moses Maimonides](#) described and treated many conditions that he claimed were due to unhealthy behaviours. His writings link longevity to a healthy lifestyle and moderate diet.

[Thomas Jefferson](#) considered personal good health essential to America's founding principles: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. He spoke about health as a natural right of the people. To paraphrase, Jefferson argued that without health there is no happiness. He gained experience working in France's public health system, and he was instrumental in building America's emerging hospital network and health delivery system. The US government appointed a Supervising Surgeon in 1871. The role later became known as the Surgeon General. The government commissioned a public health corps near the end of the 1800s to protect, promote, and advance health and safety. Nurses and doctors evaluated every immigrant to the United States passing through [Ellis Island](#) beginning in the 1800s. Ellis Island had a hospital where immigrants were nursed to health before being released into New York.

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Scientists began researching methods to protect [public health](#) after identifying causes and implementing strategies for prevention. The field of public health is credited with contributing to some of the most significant advances to human health and longevity: clean water, garbage control and disposal, discovery of [antibiotics](#), [immunizations](#), prenatal programs, identification and control of infectious diseases, soap and disinfectants used in washing hands, food safety, and more recently motor-vehicle and workplace safety programs.

Personal responsibility for healthy behavior, advancements in medical science, and commitments to advancing public-health agendas have steadily increased human life expectancy to over seventy years for males and several years longer for females. In the 1940s the World Health Organization added psychological integrity as an essential component in the health and well-being of people. [Alcoholism](#), drug abuse, [depression](#), suicide prevention, and eating disorders are classified under mental health. Most advanced nations commit resources to improving mental health.

Health Today

Herbs and plants are still being used to improve health and ensure a longer life. Herbal medicine is

standard practice among 80 percent of the people in Africa and Asia, according to the World Health Organization. Consumer sales of global herbal supplements reach \$100 billion annually, as people seek ways to ensure better health.

Modern scientific evidence strongly links health and [longevity](#) to [genetics](#). Altering genes and using stem cells are the most recent therapies for improving health. [Genetic testing](#) can also lead to the use of more traditional health interventions in a preventative manner. For instance, women from families whose females have a predisposition and family history of breast cancer may choose chemical and surgical options such as mastectomies as health prevention measures. Obesity, drug abuse, and alcoholism are linked to genetics in some studies, and gene-altering science is looking for ways to prevent these health problems. Sizable investments in detoxification and healthy eating programs are popular treatment alternatives in health care. Advanced countries are dedicating resources to improving mental health, cleaning air pollution to improve human and environmental health, and fluoridating potable water to reduce cavities and tooth loss.

Health status and [quality of life](#) are related to social and economic status, the physical environment where people live, access to medicines and medical treatment, and personal lifestyles and behaviors. [Malnutrition](#) is a significant cause of mental illness and death in poor countries, yet wealthy countries experience health problems related to economic status too: childhood and adult obesity rates are high in advanced nations, which is related to high levels of heart disease, the leading cause of death.

Since the 1950s, the US government has set health standards for food safety and medicines. In 1951, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and later the Administration on Aging were established with mandates to improve health care in the United States. The United States spends about \$4 trillion a year on health care. Among the thirteen highest-income nations, however, the United States ranks low in rates of good health, especially in outcomes for chronic conditions, [obesity](#), and infant mortality. Overall health is not better than elsewhere, and neither is longevity.

The availability of health education and health care has never been more accessible and plentiful since the digital age and [social media](#). There is a plethora of health apps, physicians on line, wearable technology reporting health information to individuals and doctors, health bloggers, and print media that disseminate health information. Pew Research Center reported in 2013 that 72 percent of Internet users look for health information online. People most commonly search for online information about specific diseases, conditions, treatments, procedures, and health and medical professionals. With Internet use expanding worldwide, it is likely social media will be an even more important contributor to the promotion of health-care services and awareness in the future.

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