

# Health Education Prerequisite for Promoting Public Health and Well Being

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## ABSTRACT

**Health is the foundation upon which happiness, strength and well being of the nation depends. It is prerequisite for productivity and developmental progress of the nation. As we know that health is a condition or state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not just absence of any disease or illness or injury. It is central to living active, long, healthy and happy life. Therefore, every individual of the nation needs to be healthy for living a quality life. The progress of nation depends greatly on the quality of its public health. Health is man's greatest wealth, for it lays a solid foundation for his complete happiness. For the individuals, communities and nation to progress, it is indispensable to put emphasis upon health care and well being of the community. Health education is an integral component of health promotion as it renders significant contribution in promoting public health and well being. This paper attempts to throw light on how health education is prerequisite for promoting good health and well being of the nation as health issues have been raised and people are living stressful life and all the time are under threat of disease or injury.**

**Keywords: Health Education, Public Health, Well Being, Prerequisite.**

## INTRODUCTION

Health is a condition of being safe and sound. The World Health Organization defined health as “ A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or injury. Health is a quality of life which promotes sound, efficient mind and balanced emotions so that an individual is able to live most and serve best. As J.F. William said, “Health is the quality of life that enables the individual to live most and serve best”. Health and well being are significant and is a state of delight or a feeling of spiritual, physical and mental well being. It is a psycho-spiritual state. Indian concept of health can be viewed at three levels – cognitive, affective and conative. At the cognitive level an healthy person is peaceful, quiet serene, and free from conflicts and attachments. At the affective level the person is free from egoistic desires, and equipoised in pain and pleasure. At the conative level well-being lies in performing one's duty or action. According to the Taittiriya Upanishads, happiness, joy and well-being are the manifestation of Ananda (bliss), which is our true nature. We are born with a sound mind and body for living a healthy life but due to stress, anxiety, hypertension, unhealthy lifestyle in today's world, we have hampered our health system to a great extent. Hence we as individuals, communities and nation needs to practice safe and good sound health habits by building and maintaining a healthy body and mind.

Public health is science that creates community, statewide and nationwide conditions that promotes health, prevent disease and also encourages healthy behavior among the population of the nation. Good health is result of proper medical care, proper public policies and programmes that work in protecting and improving health of the people of the nation. Public health works by educating the public about healthier life, undertaking physical and fitness activities, preventing disease outbreaks and the spread of infections, diseases, ensuring supply of safe water and food, preventing injury, preparing for emergency and disaster management and creating safe and clean environment for the communities and nation.

## Health Education

A person's health habits, attitudes and goals are the result of what an individual is taught and what he sees in family, home, school, friends and at work. The process of education determines how learning takes place in the field of health. Thus health education implies education for health. It provides an educational field for the purpose of improving healthy, effective and happy life. The purpose of health education is to bring favourable changes in health behaviour in order to improve living. It is not composed of all the sciences combined together rather it draws from them the purposeful applications that particularly pertain to more effective living.

Health education includes scientific knowledge to plan wholesome attitude and practices leading to improved health behaviour. The subjects like education, sociology, psychology and educational psychology provide the knowledge about the understanding methods and activities that assists in changing individuals behavior for more healthy and effective living in the environment. Therefore, through health education in educational institutions and training centres changes in the health practices of students, communities and nation are brought about by knowledge, information and changes in the attitude. Health Education renders a significant contribution in promoting public health and wellbeing by teaching the public about the art of living. The individuals are able to generate awareness in terms of various factors that are indispensable in promoting good health and well being.

### FACTORS AFFECTING HEALTH OF A PUBLIC

Health of public is largely determined by the social, physical, economic and cultural environment in which we live, work and learn. Social , economic and factors ( such as – political participation, racism, sexism, power, inequality, poverty, social exclusion), Living and working conditions ( such as- air, water, soil quality, noise, working environment, employment, wages benefits, segregation, social networks, housing and access to food), Public Services And Infrastructure ( such as education, community centres, parks, transportation, economic development and health care), Individual Behaviour ( such as-nutrition, diet, exercise, addictions and coping stress), Individual Factors (such as-age, sex genetics) are some of the factors that influences health status of the public which are also known as determinants of health. Some of the factors of health are discussed under broad categories:

**Policies:** Policies made at the local, state and national level have great effect on public's health. These policies may affect the population over extended period of time or in changing the individual's behaviour.

**Social factors:** Social determinants of health reflect the social factors and environment in which public are born, live, age and work. If these factors does not meet the quality of life outcomes then health may be hampered and lead to diseases.

**Social Exclusion:** Social exclusion can have huge impact on health of the public due to number of different reasons like poverty, old age, illness, mental ill-health and disability etc. So there is great need to remove such exclusions or disparities by education in order to promote public health and well being.

**Planning:** Good local planning at the grass root and central level in health Services and health care greatly support the health and well being of the public and communities in which they live and work.

**Living Conditions And Environment:** The world we live in consists of factors and conditions such as natural environment ( soil, forests, rivers, plants, weather, ponds etc),housing, homes, neighborhood, built environment, exposure to toxic substance, people with disabilities play important role in promoting public health and well being. Our healthy habits and physical environment contribute to large extent on our health and well being. Therefore, combined efforts of the government, communities, public and system of education play a vital role in creating a safe physical environment for the public to work, learn and live a healthy and happy life.

**Health Services:** Adequate medical, dental care and health education is an essential factor that contributes in promoting effective and happy living. Health services like health guidance, periodic health examination, recording of health histories and clinical surgical and hospital care ranges from preventive to curative measures play a vital role in creating a safe and sound public health and well being.

**Proper Nutrition:** Nutrition is considered to be a separate health producing factor as it is a necessity to good health, life and well being of the public. Hence, eating a balanced and proper nutritious diet is an essential life activity. Proper Nutrition is essential and purposeful for proper growth and repair, for regulation of body processes and to yield energy. For well being and good health right kind of food is essential and important.

**Biological Factors:** Some biological and genetic factors affect some people more than others, like old people suffer more in old age then in compare to other stages of development. Some diseases are genetic like diabetes, gall bladder and heart disease etc are transferable from parents to their children. Age, sex, inherited diseases, HIV, cancer, heart diseases, pneumonia, tuberculosis, influenza, etc., are some of the examples of biological and genetic social determinants of health which have adverse effects on the health and well being of the public.

**Individual Behaviour:** Individual Behaviour play an important role in promotion of health and well being of the individuals. Many public health and health care interventions contribute a lot in changing individual behaviour such as good and balanced nutrition, diet, exercise, yoga or physical activities, etc. Good health play an important role in overcoming many chronic diseases by bringing positive changes in individual behaviour through education and awareness.

**Employment:** Employment is another factor which play an important role in promoting or hampering public health. Employment guarantees stability and satisfaction whereas unemployment creates instability and dissatisfaction which hampers mental and physical health of the individuals.

**Psychological Factors:** Psychological Factors like stress management, anger management, reduction in tension and positive thinking and positive attitude contribute a lot for a healthy well being. Through education and counseling one is able to generate awareness in terms of methods and approaches employed to manage one's anger, stress and maintain positive thinking.

**Cultural Factors:** Culture and society plays an important role in mental health, mental illness and mental health services. Understanding the wide ranging roles of culture and society helps the mental healthcare workers to design and deliver services that are more responsive to the needs of racial and ethnic groups of society.

**Health Habits:** Health habit is a health-related behaviour that is often performed and established automatically without being aware. These habits are usually developed early in age and gets stabilizes around the age of 12 or 13(Cohen, Brownell, & Fleix, q1990). Through health education health habits like healthy diet, exercise, brushing one's teeth, wearing seat belt etc. are reinforced.

### CONCLUSION

Health education prepares the public, communities and nation for complete living by teaching art of living. Complete living involves right ruling of conduct in all circumstances. It is health education that teaches the public, communities and nation in what way to treat the body and mind, and in what way to manage our affairs , and behave as a good citizen, and in what way to utilize all the sources of happiness and how to live completely. Hence, the course of health education is an integral part of the total health programme of educational institutions for promoting health and well being of the public.

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