

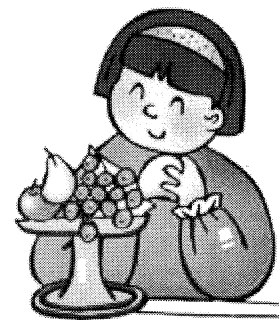
What Does Health Really Mean?

By Jennifer Kenny



¹ What do you think of when someone says he or she is healthy? Most people would answer that question by saying they are not sick. That usually means they are free from disease. Today, though, health needs to take into account lifestyle as well as infection. What does that mean?

² Well, in the 1800s, most people died from **infections** that were passed from person to person. These infections included polio and pneumonia. Therefore, when a person considered himself healthy, it means he wasn't suffering from these infections or many others like tuberculosis or the flu.



³ Today most of these infections are under control because of advances in medicine and advances in prevention. Many of the factors that affect our health nowadays are lifestyle ones. **Lifestyle diseases** such as some kinds of diabetes, heart disease, and cancer are huge health problems in our society. They are caused partly by unhealthy actions and partly by other things.

⁴ There are risk factors associated with any health problems. What are **risk factors**? Risk factors are things that increase your chances of injury, disease, or any other health problems. There are different kinds of risk factors. Some are controllable; others are not. The difference between the two is obvious.

⁵ A person can do something about **controllable risk factors**. For example, heart disease is a huge problem in modern times. Being overweight, not exercising, smoking, and eating poorly are all controllable risk factors. To decrease the risk of heart disease, a person can choose to exercise, not smoke, lose weight, and eat nutritious meals.

⁶ Unfortunately, a person can't do anything about **uncontrollable risk factors**. These risk factors can't be changed. Uncontrollable risk factors for heart disease are age, race, gender, and heredity. Older people are more likely to have heart problems. However, no one can change how old he or she is. More men have heart problems than women. However, you are what you are.

⁷ Therefore, it is obvious; there isn't much a person can do to change uncontrollable risk factors. Changing those risk factors which are controllable needs to happen, in order to maintain good health, especially in this day and age.

⁸ You are still young. The leading cause of death for children is motor vehicle accidents. So why should you be concerned about risk factors? Well, the leading cause of death for those between 19 and 65 is cancer; older than 65, the leading cause of death is heart disease. Stopping risk behaviors early in life can help ensure a healthy future.

⁹ As young as you are, you are quite powerful! Protect yourself from these common teen risk factors: sedentary lifestyle, alcohol and drug use, sexual activity, injury-causing behaviors, smoking, and poor eating.

¹⁰ It is important to be physically active. Sedentary is the opposite of that. Being sedentary is

a risk factor for diabetes and heart disease.

¹¹ Alcohol and drug abuse can cause certain types of cancer, heart disease, and brain damage. These types of abuse are also leading causes in motor vehicle accidents, violent activities, and mental issues.

¹² Sexual activity in risky situations can lead to health problems. HIV infection can lead to AIDS. Unplanned pregnancy can certainly alter a life.

¹³ Injury-causing behaviors cover a wide variety of areas for teenagers. For example, many teens choose not to use a seat belt and that can be a great risk if the individual is in a car accident.

¹⁴ Many teens start to smoke not understanding how addictive tobacco use is. Smoking is considered the leading preventable cause of death in our country. Smoking can lead to heart disease, respiratory problems, and cancer.

¹⁵ Eating in a nutritious manner is essential to preventing many lifestyle diseases. Eating healthy foods can help decrease an individual's chances of cancer and heart disease. Eating the wrong foods can have the opposite effects.

¹⁶ In this day and age, your choices have a definitive effect on your **health**, or state-of-well-being. Choose wisely.

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