CONTENT STRAND: HEALTHY, SAFE AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

TOPIC 8
Promoting healthy, safe and active communities

8.1 Overview

8.1.1 Introduction

In this topic you will explore the concept of building healthy, safe and active communities and the many contextual factors that influence decision-making around health. You will consider individual, sociocultural and political factors such as risk-taking behaviours, socioeconomic status, education, gender, laws and the physical environment with reference to their influence on people’s ability to make good decisions in relation to health and wellbeing. You will also investigate the conditions that create an environment that is supportive of health.

Healthy eating is one way to promote good health.

Resources

- eLesson: Promoting healthy, safe and active communities (eles-2970)
- Digital doc: Key terms glossary (doc-29337)

Essential Questions

What influences the decisions we make about our health and risk behaviours?
How can we increase our individual empowerment and be able to take more control over our health?

Syllabus Outcomes

A student:
- researches and appraises the effectiveness of health information and support services available in the community (PD5-2)
- critiques contextual factors, attitudes and behaviours to effectively promote health, safety, wellbeing and participation in physical activity (PD5-6)
- plans, implements and critiques strategies to promote health, safety, wellbeing and participation in physical activity in their communities (PD5-7)
- designs, implements and evaluates personalised plans to enhance health and participation in a lifetime of physical activity (PD5-8)
- assesses and applies self-management skills to effectively manage complex situations. (PD5-9)
8.2 Influences on health decision-making and risk-taking

Individual and political factors together with sociocultural influences all affect your health decisions and risk-taking.

8.2.1 Factors influencing health decision-making

Many Australian children and young people enjoy good health, and a healthy safe lifestyle. However, several groups of people within Australia do not experience a level of health as good as that of others. Which groups experience lower levels of health? What is the impact of inequities in the health levels of particular groups of people?

What factors influence the decisions young people make about their health and risk-taking behaviours? View the advertisement in the Death Blooms weblink in the Resources tab and identify the positive and negative behaviours around road safety demonstrated by the characters in the advertisement. Discuss the significance of the title ‘Death Blooms’.

The contextual factors that influence the decisions young people make about their health are linked to the social and economic environments in which they live. People who are disadvantaged because they come from environments where there is little money, poor access to healthcare, low levels of education, high unemployment and poor physical, social and emotional support are more likely to have poor levels of health. These disadvantages limit people’s choices and their ability to make good decisions relating to health.

Some of these factors are not within a young person’s control, such as their family’s wealth, their cultural background and the environment in which they live. There are, however, a number of factors over which young people can have some control to help them make better decisions for their health. For example, the extent to which young people allow their peer group to influence their attitudes and their participation in risk-taking behaviours, or whether they choose to engage in regular physical activity is within their control. The choice of food eaten is a factor somewhat in the control of young people. For example, when they go out with friends, they are more in control of their food choices than when they are at home, eating with the family.

We can all learn to make better choices about our health and safety. For young people, developing the necessary skills such as positive communication, assertiveness and negotiation is an important step towards making healthier choices in all aspects of life.
DID YOU KNOW?
Risks can be positive or negative. We often see and hear of negative risk taking such as speeding while driving or illicit drug taking. These risks don’t have a positive outcome or are too risky to be worthwhile. Positive risks usually have a positive outcome and are manageable if it doesn’t work out as expected, for example a job interview or seeking election as school captain.

8.2.2 Individual contextual factors
The level of knowledge people have about health and the importance they place on their own health and the health of others impacts on the decisions they make. Young people who have been educated about safe sex behaviours, for example, are better able to make decisions to prevent sexually transmitted infections than those who don’t have this education. Additionally, those who have developed positive communication and negotiation skills are more likely to make good decisions about their sexual health and their personal safety within sexual relationships.

HEALTH FACT
Health decisions and risky behaviours are not simply an individual responsibility — they are shaped by a range of influences. When young people value their health, they are more likely to make positive health decisions.

There are other factors that contribute to health decision-making. The level of support young people receive from their family and peers, access to further information and health services, and the ability to interpret health information are some factors that can influence young people’s decisions.

Young people’s values are also a significant factor in influencing the decisions they make about their health and safety. Your values are formed through your interactions with others, your experiences within your community and what you are taught to value by your parents, family and teachers.

Some values are viewed by society as core values, such as respect, responsibility, cooperation, fairness, participation and integrity. Young people who
have these values are more likely to consider the consequences of their behaviours for others and themselves. They are more likely to choose behaviours that are responsible and respectful. When young people take responsibility for themselves and respect others, they are less likely to choose risky behaviours such as drink-driving, unprotected sex or alcohol abuse. The values that young people hold influence other health-related decisions such as the levels of physical activity or food choices they make.

DID YOU KNOW?
The number of people aged 12–24 who have experimented with drugs continues to fall. In the 18–24 age group, only 28 per cent had tried drugs in 2016, down from 37 per cent in 2001. The average age at which people first tried an illicit drug is also rising — to 19.7 in 2016, the oldest age of initiation since 1995.

8.2 Activities
What influences your decisions?
1. In groups of three or four, read the following scenarios and identify what you would do in each case.
   (a) You are at a party with friends and someone offers you a pill and says it will make you feel good.
   (b) You go out on a first date with someone you have liked for a while. Your date pressures you to have sex that night.
   (c) You have your provisional licence (P plates) and you are driving to a party with some friends. They tell you to drive faster.
   (d) Whenever you spend time with friends, your partner hassles you about who you are with and where you are all the time.
   (e) You think you or your partner might be pregnant.
   (f) Your best friend asks you for support to get in shape by going on a healthy diet and doing regular exercise together.
2. Identify the contextual factors that influenced your decisions in each scenario and explain them to the group.
3. Identify and explain the contextual factors and influences in your life that have an impact on the decisions you make about your health.
4. Imagine that one of your good friends has recently moved to a small country town because their mum took a new job. While this is great news for your friend's mum, your friend is not looking forward to the move. They are anxious about moving to a small town, starting at a new school and making new friends. Write a letter to this friend with some advice about how they can keep mentally and physically healthy during this time of change. Some ideas you could mention include sleep, physical activity and mindfulness, but come up with your own advice too.

on Resources

Digital doc: Worksheet 8.1 How do you support your health? (doc-29330)

8.2 Check and challenge
Explain
1. Identify and explain contextual factors that influence health decision-making.
2. Identify and explain factors that can impact on young people’s decisions about sexual health, diet, physical activity, road use, drug use and access to support services.
Elaborate

3. Would you describe yourself as someone who takes risks? Make a list of risks that could have a positive impact on health and a list of those risks which could be negative to health.

Evaluate

4. Evaluate the extent to which health decisions are solely the responsibility of an individual.
5. Watch the eLesson The police and you in the Resources tab to answer these questions:
   (a) How can the police help us?
   (b) How can we help the police?

8.3 Sociocultural and political influences on health

’Sociocultural’ factors that can influence health relate to the social and cultural conditions you may experience. These include socioeconomic status, relationships, social expectations of gender and family influences such as cultural background and lifestyle. Political influences relate to how legislation impacts on your health decisions and outcomes.

8.3.1 Sociocultural factors

Sociocultural factors that have an impact on people’s ability to make positive decisions about their health include their family, peer group, gender and culture.

Family is a very significant influence on young people’s decision-making. Young people generally see their parents as a very reliable source of information on a range of topics including education, career decisions, relationships and health. Family expectations about what is appropriate behaviour are also an important factor. Usually our family members are those we respect most and are very important to us. The culture, lifestyle and values of the family are significant factors that influence the health of young people and the knowledge they take into adulthood.

A person’s cultural background and religion can influence their decisions about diet, level of physical activity, sexual activity, ability to access support services and attitudes to drug use. New immigrants tend to be influenced more by their own culture than immigrants who have lived in Australia for a number of years.
People of Indigenous background often make different lifestyle and health-related decisions based on their cultural values. In traditional Indigenous communities, elders teach important traditions and pass on their skills, knowledge and personal experiences to the younger people. They educate children about the way of life of their people. Indigenous communities have strong family values which may influence their decisions about diet, levels of physical activity and risk-taking behaviours.

Gender and societal expectations are factors that also have a significant impact on the decisions young people make about their health, and gender stereotypes can influence young people’s beliefs about how they should behave and relate to others. Research shows that young men are more likely to take risks with their health and safety than young women. Young men also have higher rates of injury, violence and car accidents, revealing greater risk-taking behaviours, which include binge drinking, driving at speed, driving more powerful cars, having sex with multiple partners and a greater likelihood of being drug- or alcohol-affected during sexual encounters.

Gender stereotypes can also have a negative impact on young women’s health. Social media trends and the print, television and online media’s common portrayal of female beauty being synonymous with being thin, for example, influence girls’ self-image and contribute to higher rates of eating disorders in young women.

Your peer group can have a positive or negative impact on decisions about your health and risk-taking behaviours. If your friends are caring and supportive, and they value health and respect the rights of others by being responsible, then they are more likely to have a positive influence on your decisions about your health. Unfortunately, within some peer groups people are not supportive of each other. They engage in risky behaviours such as binge drinking and unsafe road behaviours and may encourage others to do so too.
8.3.2 Political factors

Political influences by way of taxes and legislation can impose certain restrictions on choices we make. These are generally intended to be for the benefit of society and to help us to make good health-related decisions. For example, a high rate of tax is applied to cigarettes and other tobacco products; goods and services tax (GST) is levied on fast food and many processed or packaged food items in supermarkets, but there is no GST on fresh produce. Such measures can influence and encourage healthier lifestyle choices. Laws and government regulations are designed to protect people from unsafe behaviours and keep the community as a whole safe. The law plays a significant role in influencing people’s decisions and this in turn impacts on their safety and that of others. For example, many young people choose to wear their seatbelts and do not drink alcohol before driving because they are required to do so under the law.

Age limits on alcohol purchases and consumption restrict young people’s access to alcohol and make it more difficult for them to frequent places where alcohol is sold.

The age of consent law in New South Wales was introduced to protect young people from being taken advantage of sexually by older people. It is illegal in New South Wales to have a sexual relationship or engage in sexual acts with a person under the age of 16 years. The age of consent law is also designed to prevent young people from making decisions about their health that they may not yet be ready to make.

Anti-discrimination legislation protects people from discrimination, harassment and vilification. It reinforces the message that treating someone unfairly because they are different is unacceptable in our society. This legislation is the basis for many policies and procedures that are adopted in workplaces, including schools, to ensure that people are empowered to make the best decisions about their health and wellbeing.

Local governments are involved in promoting healthy environments for people to live and play in. These governments are responsible for providing and maintaining local infrastructure, sanitation and sewage, waste disposal (weekly garbage collection) and the upkeep of parks and recreational facilities.

8 Promoting healthy, safe and active communities
8.3 Activities

Family and cultural influences
1. With a partner, discuss the following questions.
   (a) How do your parents’ expectations about your behaviour influence the decisions you make about your health, such as your diet and alcohol use?
   (b) When you go out with friends, is your family a factor in your personal safety plans? (Would your parents encourage you to call them if, for example, you needed a lift home from a party?)
   (c) Has your family influenced your participation or non-participation in physical activity? Explain.
   (d) How does your family provide support or advice about the health or medical services you access?
   (e) Describe how your cultural background has influenced your decisions about your health and risk-taking behaviours.

Gender and health
2. In small groups or as a class, discuss the following questions.
   (a) Explain how gender stereotypes influence young people’s decisions about their health.
   (b) Do you think the decisions young people make about their health and their behaviours are influenced by gender? Explain.
   (c) How does gender influence access to health services or getting information about health?
   (d) Do you think gender has an impact on risk-taking behaviours in young people? Explain.
   (e) Does your gender influence your decisions and risk-taking behaviours? Explain.
   (f) Explain why gender stereotypes can have a negative influence on young people’s health.
   (g) Propose some strategies for young people that challenge gender stereotypes and the impact of gender on young people, so they are better able to make good decisions about their health and safety. Role-play some of the strategies in class.

Resources

Digital doc: Worksheet 8.2 Reducing risks on the road (doc-29331)

8.3 Check and challenge

Explain
1. Identify sociocultural factors that impact on health.
2. Explain how peer groups might influence risk-taking by using an example.
3. Explain a law designed to influence health in a positive way by using an example.

Elaborate
4. Describe how family influences can assist in health decision-making.
5. Use an example to identify how a person’s cultural background may influence food choices.

Evaluate
6. Use the Gender stereotypes in children’s toys weblink in the Resources tab to view the video exploring the gender stereotyping of toys offered to young children. Can you identify the ways that children are gender-stereotyped by the adults in this clip?

Resources

Weblink: Gender stereotypes in children’s toys
8.4 Community influences on health behaviours

A number of factors can affect the health of people in the community. In this subtopic you will explore how the context of people’s lives contributes to their health. You will look at why community health programs are vitally important and consider the health of your own community.

8.4.1 Context of health

Each community plays an important role in the health of individuals. Communities are groups of people who are linked by a common social structure and provide a sense of belonging to their members. Communities can influence health by providing and promoting services to individuals, providing opportunities for individuals and groups to make connections, and encouraging healthy and active lifestyle choices. People may belong to communities based on location, religion or belief, cultural background, interests and hobbies, or education.

Think about how your local community encourages or discourages the health of the individuals in it. What about your school community?

8.4.2 Determinants of health

The health of individuals and communities is affected by many factors. These include:

- where we live
- what the physical environment is like
- genetics
- how much we earn
- education level
- our relationships with friends and family.

Surprisingly, access to and the use of healthcare services often have less of an impact on a person’s ability to be healthy. If individuals require healthcare services such as doctors, dentists, counsellors or psychologists, they will usually seek them out. It is the more immediate behavioural and contextual factors that can greatly determine the health of individuals and communities.
Health is influenced by the context of people’s lives. The determinants of health include the social and economic environment, the physical environment, and the person’s individual characteristics and behaviours. Individuals are unlikely to be able to directly control many of the determinants of health. The World Health Organization has identified the things that make people healthy or not.

8.4.3 Individual behaviours that influence health and wellbeing

Individuals have control over many behaviours that can influence their health and wellbeing. Some people might consider ‘health’ to be solely about nutrition and exercise, but many other areas can determine how healthy a person is.

- Physical activity is important for maintaining good health because it reduces cardiovascular risk factors, protects against some forms of cancer, strengthens the musculoskeletal system, and improves mental wellbeing by reducing symptoms of depression, stress and anxiety. Through these improvements, self-confidence, self-esteem, energy levels, sleep quality and ability to concentrate all increase.
- Nutrition is a protective factor against many diseases including coronary heart disease, hypertension, stroke, type 2 diabetes and many forms of cancer.
- Overweight/obesity can impact an individual’s psychological wellbeing, increase their risk of developing cardiovascular conditions, asthma and type 2 diabetes, and can be associated with social isolation and lower income opportunities throughout life.
- Sun protection helps to reduce the risk of melanoma. By adopting skin cancer prevention measures, such as wearing sunscreen, a hat, a shirt that covers your skin, sunglasses, and sitting in the shade during the highest UV danger parts of the day, you can significantly reduce your chances of experiencing sun-related skin damage and cancer.
- Substance use (smoking, alcohol and other drugs) can cause a range of health and social problems, both in the short term and longer term.
- Sexual health can be protected by the knowledge and use of safe sexual practices to prevent STIs and contraception to prevent pregnancy.
• Injury prevention campaigns can reduce the impact of incidents such as injuries caused by road accidents, assaults and poisonings.
• Mental health can significantly impact a person’s physical health and vice versa.
Complete the My health worksheet in the Resources tab to look at your own health behaviours and explore ways you can adjust your lifestyle to improve your own health and wellbeing.

8.4.4 Other influences on the health and wellbeing of your community
Aside from the behaviours of individuals, other factors can influence the health and wellbeing of the community.
• Environmental factors — these include access to locations that encourage or enhance physical activity such as parks, sporting ovals, recreation centres and sporting stadiums. The quality of the air, water, food and soil where people live are other important environmental factors that can affect health. For example, air pollution can make it unpleasant and unhealthy to exercise outside or even walk from place to place, limiting the choice of exercise options available in the community.
• A lack of access to fresh fruit and vegetables could also have a negative impact on food choices.
• Access to healthcare facilities in the community can increase the ability of people to access preventative health programs and seek medical care when needed.
• Community factors — support services, family cohesion, social networks and community participation all contribute to an individual’s social health. How you connect with others and the relationships and support networks you have can determine your social wellbeing.
• Socioeconomic factors — such as where you live, level of education, employment and income levels. These can affect the access you have to certain health services, medicines and treatments that aid in keeping you healthy.
• Education can determine the knowledge you have in relation to your own health. For example, knowledge of the health issues associated with smoking and drug use can discourage young people from using these substances and thereby improve their health.
• Income levels can determine the level of access you have to health services, and the types and quality of services to which you have access as well as the types of foods you can afford to buy and the forms of physical activity you can access.
• Cultural factors — how engaged you are in your local community and the opportunities provided by the community for engagement affect your health. Cultural factors may limit an individual’s access to physical activity, or encourage them to participate actively in sport. Culture can also influence the types of food you eat.
• Health factors — such as attitudes, beliefs and knowledge of physical activity, eating habits, smoking and alcohol consumption, and vaccinations to prevent communicable diseases.
8.4.5 Access to community health resources

Government has always had an important role to play in public health. This role has involved funding and regulation of health services such as hospitals and protecting the public from health issues such as the spread of infectious diseases, but increasingly it is also focused on promoting health in the community. This focus aims to prevent illness, particularly lifestyle-related conditions such as obesity and type 2 diabetes. Through prevention-related measures we see local governments taking some responsibility for creating healthier communities.

Community health resources are any facilities, funds (money), people and materials that can be used to provide healthcare and health-promoting services to the local community. These resources and services aim to improve the health and wellbeing of local communities by encouraging people to take an interest in their own health and participate in behaviours that promote good health for all. Healthcare providers such as doctors provide care to individuals, education programs aim to promote the prevention of lifestyle-related illnesses, and the development of healthcare programs and activities aims to improve social and physical environments in the community.

Support for marginalised groups in a community

It is an unfortunate aspect of society today that marginalisation, prejudice, harassment and homophobia still impact negatively on the health and wellbeing of some individuals and communities. Indigenous Australians, minority ethnic groups and those in the LGBTIQ community may be affected by stereotypes and negative expectations from within the community. Can you think of some other groups in your community that would experience such negative attitudes? How would this make these people/groups feel? Do you think these stereotypes influence the way you think, behave and act?

Make a list of the words that come to mind when you think of the stereotypes around certain population groups, e.g. disabled people, those who identify as LGBTQI, Indigenous Australians and those from culturally diverse backgrounds. Use the Mainstreaming Disability weblink in the Resources tab to view a Ted Talk by Dylan Alcott. After viewing the Ted Talk, rewrite your list of words associated with the stereotyped groups. Which of these could be used to break down common stereotypes of marginalised groups in society?

Can everyone in all communities access these health resources? For the marginalised in our community, access to healthcare is complicated by factors such as a lack of safe or adequate housing, inadequate access to financial support, education or employment, and in some cases a mistrust of health services. Other barriers such as language or culture can restrict access to health services for some Australians. People, or groups of people, who are pushed to the fringe of society by others in the community, and those who are different from the perceived ‘norm’, are considered to be marginalised. The marginalised in your community could include Indigenous people, cultural/ethnic groups, seniors, youths, people who are a minority in terms of their sexual orientation or gender identity and people with a disability.
Can you think of any other groups who might be considered marginalised? What factors do you think contribute to the situation of marginalised people? How is their health affected and why?

Table 8.1 outlines how members of the community become disadvantaged.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social stigmatisation (disapproval)</td>
<td>Being part of more than one stigmatised group, such as being Indigenous, a single parent who relies on welfare, having a disability, not being in paid employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early life disadvantage</td>
<td>Having divorced parents, parents who are unemployed, not finishing school, leaving home early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial hardship</td>
<td>Relying on government income support, having little or no wealth, low income, high financial stress, having unfavourable debt such as credit card debt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor health</td>
<td>Suffering chronic health problems, poor physical and/or mental health, poor health choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social isolation</td>
<td>Having poor relationships, little social support, few social contacts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Based on Cruwys, T., Berry, H., Cassells, R. et al., *Marginalised Australians: characteristics and predictors of exit over ten years 2001–10*, University of Canberra, table 2, ‘Marginalisation — five domains of disadvantage’, p. 10.

Compared to those in the community who are not disadvantaged, marginalised/disadvantaged individuals or groups:

- have much poorer physical and mental health
- are more likely to have chronic health problems and to report poor physical health
- report fewer social contacts and a lower number of people upon whom they can rely
- are more likely to receive income support (particularly the Disability Support Pension, Newstart unemployment benefits or Parenting Payment Single) and are reliant on this support for most of their income.

Access the Invisible Discriminator weblink in the Resources tab to investigate the state of discrimination and community attitudes towards Indigenous Australians. Watch the included ‘Invisible Discriminator’ video, outlining the psychological effect that subtle racism has on Indigenous Australians. What impact did this video have on you?

Now use the Multicultural communities weblink to watch a clip that explores the impact that racial and cultural discrimination can have on a person’s mental health. Given our multicultural society in Australia, complexities of identity can arise and this weblink highlights the fact that many people in Australia identify with a number of communities.

Finally, use the Homophobia has no place in society weblink to watch a short documentary on homophobia in Australian Rules football (AFL).
Use the **Youth community health services** weblink in the Resources tab to examine a range of health-focused programs for young people and their families in a local community.

### 8.4 Activities

**Media watch**

1. (a) Find an online article, newspaper or magazine report about a marginalised group in your community.
   (b) Compare the class collection to see the different marginalised groups in your community.
   (c) Discuss why these people or groups are marginalised and what you could do to support them.
   (d) What social and economic factors can you identify that affect the health of these people/groups?

**Investigate and create**

2. (a) In pairs, investigate community health resources in your area. Find out what they offer, how accessible they are (location, cost, etc.) and who accesses them.
   (b) Create a brochure to distribute at the local council outlining services in the community, or create an app outlining these services. If creating an app, consider:
      - what the app will be called
      - what the app link will look like
      - the features of your app.

**Growing up poor**

3. (a) Access the **Growing up poor** weblink in the Resources tab to watch the *Four Corners* episode ‘Growing up poor’.
   (b) As a class, discuss your reactions to this community.
   (c) Do you think they are happy living in their current circumstances?
   (d) Have they done anything to change their circumstances?
   (e) What can the people in this community do to change their circumstances?

**Program improvement**

4. Investigate a local youth community health program. What could you change about the program to:
   - make it more attractive to young people in your local community
   - include a wider range of young people and make it more inclusive for those involved
   - make it more accessible to young people in your community
   - promote the program in a variety of ways to ensure a greater audience is captured?

### 8.4 Check and challenge

**Explain**

1. What cultural groups can you identify in your community?
2. How is income and social status linked to better health?
Elaborate
3. Have you or someone you know been a part of a marginalised group in the community? Have you/they experienced negative health consequences as a result?
4. When you think about the future, do you have a clear vision of where you want to live, whether you will work, have children and so on? What will the potential health consequences be of the decisions you make?

Evaluate
5. With the realisation that contextual factors influence health, what can the government do to minimise their impact?
6. Why is it important to have an active and healthy social life?

8.5 Empowering people to get healthy

Empowering individuals and communities enhances wellbeing by giving people more control over their own health and health concerns in the areas where they live. Empowering people to make better decisions for their own health means giving them knowledge and resources to better understand and address health issues.

8.5.1 Empowering for health and wellbeing

It is important that a shared approach — with individual and community action — is undertaken if young people’s health is to improve and inequities in health are to be overcome. Creating circumstances that empower people and communities to make positive health decisions are crucial to improving health. How do we achieve this?

Road safety campaigns such as ‘Get your hand off it’ (2013) and ‘Look out before you step out’ (2016) help to give young people knowledge and skills to take control over their own health and decisions that impact on health.

The ‘Get your hand off it’ campaign aims to address the excuses that many young drivers come up with to explain their illegal use of mobile phones while driving. While many young people agree that it is dangerous to use a mobile phone while driving, large numbers of people still do it and risk serious health consequences. This campaign and others like it empower young people to change their behaviours and attitudes towards road safety by providing information about the consequences of driving while distracted. Crash data from New South Wales reveals that despite awareness about the use of mobile phones being illegal when driving, the use of a mobile phone contributed to many road crashes. Between 2010 to 2014 there were 236 crashes including seven fatal crashes and 116 injury crashes where a mobile phone was considered a contributing factor. In 2017, 42,000 drivers received a fine from NSW Police for using a mobile phone when driving.
DID YOU KNOW?
Young people are more likely to use their mobile phones to make and receive calls and text messages while driving. Being distracted while driving is a major concern and increases the risk of a crash. Being distracted for only two seconds doubles the risk of a crash which can have lifelong consequences.

Use the Get your hand off it weblink in the Resources tab to view the campaign video. Is driving while using a mobile phone acceptable to you? Do you think campaigns like this make a real difference to people’s attitudes and behaviours around road safety?

The ‘Look out before you step out’ campaign is aimed at pedestrian safety. This campaign is aimed at pedestrian safety and particularly at young people who use phones/earphones while walking on or near roads. Its main messages are to look out before you cross the road, and be aware when you are crossing. Use the Look out before you step out weblink in the Resources tab for more information.

Resources
- Weblink: Get your hand off it
- Weblink: Look out before you step out

8.5.2 Empowering individuals
For health promotion to be effective, people need to be empowered. Individual empowerment means giving people more control over health issues that directly affect them.

Supporting young people to modify their behaviours is the responsibility of family, friends and the community as a whole. The first step is ensuring young people get reliable information about all aspects of their health, but this alone is not enough. People need more than information to make positive health decisions. Young people’s attitudes, values and beliefs will influence how they use their knowledge to make good decisions.

Young people need a variety of skills in order to make positive health decisions.

These skills are best taught through learning opportunities at school, work and within the community. Young people can make better decisions about their health when they are:
- provided with accurate information — for example, information about types of contraception, healthy eating, road safety and e-safety.
- involved in decisions about their health and community health issues
- encouraged to make healthy choices
• provided with an environment that makes it easier to make healthy choices
• provided with support from family and friends
• provided with youth-friendly services and medical support
• encouraged to seek help when they need it
• given the opportunity to learn the skills needed to make good decisions about their health and safety.

Can you think of some ways that young people can make good decisions that help to keep themselves and their friends safe online? Make a set of guidelines to assist young people to be safe online.

8.5.3 Empowering communities

The extent to which different sectors participate in strategies to promote health is determined by local needs and the recognition of community health problems and safety issues. Community empowerment is very important in supporting people’s health. Community empowerment is the result of individuals and organisations working together to address an identified problem.

People feel empowered when they are part of a shared approach to achieving positive health outcomes. An example of shared responsibility is demonstrated by the community’s response to the increasing issue of overweight and obesity among children, putting them at risk of a range of medical problems, such as type 2 diabetes and heart problems.

One significant action to address childhood overweight and obesity rates has been the development of the Healthy School Canteen Strategy, a joint initiative between NSW Health and the Department of Education. Over the three-year period from 2017–2019, all public schools in New South Wales are required to transition to this health-promotion program. The strategy aims to improve healthy food choices for children and young people at school. It provides a framework for schools to take action and make changes to the food provided in their school canteen, in order to support the health of both students and staff. A range of practical resources has been developed to support schools to effectively implement this program. Students are empowered by this initiative as they are given skills and resources to make healthy choices about the food they choose at the canteen. These skills will also transfer into scenarios outside of school. Empowerment of the whole school community is promoted as all staff and students are working together to achieve the same goals. It is easier for students to make healthy choices with the support of the whole community.
There are many initiatives that target health issues within different communities. Examples of community actions include:

- local councils building bike and walking paths to encourage people to be physically active
- media advertising campaigns targeting safer road use
- Clean Up Australia Day
- the National Heart Foundation, supporting healthy food habits
- providing pamphlets to young people about available health and medical services
- youth-friendly general practitioner programs
- the Asthma Friendly Schools project
- developing community recreational facilities.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

A bullying awareness campaign on cereal boxes assisted in doubling the number of calls about bullying to Kids Helpline in three months. It is believed that greater awareness of the Kids Helpline service, combined with an increased understanding that bullying should not be tolerated, were two factors that led to the significant increase in calls.

### 8.5.4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples — family and community

Understanding, appreciation and respect for Indigenous Australians and their cultural beliefs and values is important within Australian culture and local communities. The marginalisation of Indigenous Australians is an ongoing issue in Australia and must be addressed if we are to move forward as a community and be inclusive of all. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a complex system of family; their family relationships are the core of Indigenous kinship systems that are central to the way culture is passed on and how society is organised. Learning more about how Indigenous communities relate to each other, work together and their spiritual beliefs is the first step in being inclusive and respectful.
In Indigenous culture, elders teach important traditions and pass on their skills, knowledge and personal experiences to the younger people. They educate children about the way of life of their people. In Indigenous societies, elders are treated with respect. Indigenous communities have strong family values. Children are not just the concern of the biological parents, but the entire community. Therefore, the raising, care, education and discipline of children are the responsibility of everyone. This fosters a very strong sense of community.

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, storytelling makes up a large part of everyday life. Storytelling is not only about entertaining people but is also vital in educating children about life. Through stories, children are taught about how they should act and behave, and knowledge is passed down about everyday life. Stories are also used to explain historical events, laws and spirituality. Storytelling ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage is passed on to the younger people.

Celebrations held in local communities aim to counter negative attitudes towards certain people or groups in the community by showcasing the many cultures and groups that form Australian society. An important way to promote respectful and healthy communities is for every group in our community to be recognised. Embracing the positive aspects of each culture will help ensure a rich and inclusive community.

### 8.5 Activities

**Individual action**

1. Identify the aspects of your health that you could improve. Consider mental health, physical health, sexual health and social health.
2. Identify the skills and information you need to make better decisions about your health.
3. Investigate sources of information available to you in your local area regarding young people’s health.
4. Which sources would be useful for you to obtain information about your health?
5. Identify barriers that you may encounter when trying to improve your health.
6. Propose strategies to overcome these barriers that will support you to behave in a healthy and safe way.
7. Identify ways in which you could support the health of your friends.

**Community action**

8. As the issue of low physical activity and high body weight have both been recognised as health problems of Australian young people, plan a school community initiative that would help reduce these health issues. In pairs, make a poster or video advertising campaign to promote this student-run initiative. You will need to consider who the program would be aimed at, any fundraising that would be needed, how the students will be involved and any adult involvement needed. Examples could include a walking school bus or a lunchtime walking or exercise group.

**Strategies for healthy eating and food selection**

9. Complete the [My food diary](#) worksheet in the Resources tab. Then use the weblinks [Australian Guide to Healthy Eating](#) and [Eat for Health](#) in the Resources tab to plan a menu for one day’s food intake for the following case study.

   Joanna is a 24-year-old university student who plays competitive sport three or four times each week. She drives to university, but is very active throughout the day as her lectures are spread all over campus. Joanna shares a house with three of her friends and she likes to go out with them on weekends.

**Australian Government online safety programs**

10. Use the [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#) weblink in the Resources tab to view the film [Game On](#), then complete the Game On worksheet from the website.
8.5 Check and challenge

**Explain**
1. Explain how individuals can improve their ability to make good decisions about their health.
2. Identify and explain the inequities in the level of health between individuals and communities.

**Elaborate**
3. Describe how communities can support people’s health.

**Evaluate**
4. Use the Dark side of tanning weblink in the Resources tab to view the Cancer Institute NSW health campaign highlighting the damage that can be done to your body before sunburn occurs. Propose two strategies to support this campaign for both the individual and the community.

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8.6 Creating environments that support health

Creating environments that positively support health is in everyone’s best interests.

**8.6.1 Your environment**

Most students adapt their bedrooms to reflect their likes, interests and study routines. Walls may be lined with posters, and a desk, computer, books and other items might be arranged in a particular way. By decorating and arranging your own room, you can feel supported and equipped to address the tasks at hand. In the same way that a supportive environment helps us work, study and relax at home, a supportive wider environment is important in enhancing health by providing a safe environment to make good decisions for health. This includes environments that make it easy and safe to participate in physical activity, make healthy food choices and ensure that decisions around sexual behaviours are made with knowledge and support.

Both individual and community actions are necessary to promote the health of young people. Use the Smoke-free cars weblink in the Resources tab to read the fact sheet on smoke-free cars. How does this law help to ‘develop a supportive environment’ in relation to health?

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**Resources**

- Digital doc: Worksheet 8.5 My food diary (doc-29334)
- Weblink: Australian Guide to Healthy Eating
- Weblink: Eat for Health
- Weblink: Office of the eSafety Commissioner
- Weblink: Dark side of tanning
- Weblink: Smoke-free cars
8.6.2 Advocating for positive health

Individuals not only have the ability to promote their own health, but they can also influence the health of others through advocacy. Advocacy is the act of championing or arguing for a particular issue or cause. Students can advocate for issues within their school — for example, healthier food in the canteen, diversity in the physical activity opportunities offered (so all students feel supported to be physically active) and safer school playgrounds.

Creating supportive environments is a key element of positive community health. It is certainly easier for people to make good health decisions if the environments in which they live, work and play are supportive of achieving good health. People are more likely to engage in regular physical activity, for example, if there are established sites to use such as parks, recreation centres, community pools and cycle paths, and opportunities to engage in activities such as lunchtime yoga classes at workplaces.

Schools, local government, workplaces, health services, the media, family and support groups can all play an important part in providing supportive environments that enhance health. Examples of strategies that contribute to the establishment of supportive health environments include:

- non-smoking areas in public places
- local government policing of rubbish-dumping
- the establishment of exercise groups
- businesses hiring corporate fitness companies to run physical activities for employees during lunch hours
- advertising campaigns in the media to promote health such as activity, healthy eating and positive mental health
- health education at school
- information and education campaigns by specific organisations such as the Cancer Institute
- the provision of youth-friendly recreation areas and local sports competitions
- the provision of shade areas in schools and recreation areas.

8.6.3 Supportive environments

One aspect of creating environments supportive of health is promoting strategies and actions that help people achieve their health goals in a safe and positive way. Supportive environments can be established within a school or community. They can be physical environments or places, for example, playgrounds or sporting facilities that encourage physical activity or a healthy canteen that makes it easier and cheaper to make healthy food choices, or a social environment where support is offered for people to go outside their comfort zone to achieve a better health outcome. Individuals can also establish their own supportive environments by creating personal support networks of trusted people. Having emotional, social and sometimes financial support from trusted people can have a significant impact on people’s ability to make positive changes to their health behaviours. There are also many established community support groups and
counselling services designed to help people make positive changes for their health, including Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Weight Watchers, Headspace and Relationships Australia.

Strategies to create a positive environment include:

• creating physical environments that make it safe and appealing to exercise, for example well-lit and maintained walking and bike paths that encourage people to walk, run or ride their bikes
• promoting discrete community services that address sexual health issues so that young people are not embarrassed about attending to receive the care they may need
• ensuring services provide translations of written information or ensuring services provide an interpreter, if required
• educating workers in health services about cultural sensitivities, making it more welcoming for all people to attend health services
• establishing links between local services and schools so young people can access relevant information
• educating school counsellors and PDHPE teachers about cultural sensitivities regarding accessing health services
• providing learning opportunities at school to improve awareness about sexual health, physical activity, cooking healthy meals and to develop skills needed to make better decisions for health
• creating a canteen at school where it is cheaper to buy healthy foods than unhealthy foods so that children are more likely to make the healthy choice
• removing sugary drinks from vending machines or the school canteen and replacing them with a water fountain that is free to use.

8.6 Activities
Identifying supportive environment practices

1. The following is a list of environmental areas that will concern you in one way or another. For each area, identify one aspect that supports your health and suggest one that could be improved to assist your health and that of others. The first has been done as an example.
   • Transport:
     – Use of bike lanes to keep motorists and cyclists apart
     – Installation of flashing lights in all school zones
   • Facilities for physical activity in your community
   • School
   • Restaurants and eating places
   • Entertainment
   • Medical
   • Sun protection
   • Peer group
   In small groups, choose one of your suggestions for improvement and debate its merit.

2. In small groups, prepare a short survey for the students at your school to determine the current levels of physical activity throughout the school day. Survey a number of students from a range of year levels and ask questions such as:
   • What do you do at lunchtime?
   • Are you physically active throughout the school day (e.g. recess and lunch)?
   • Are you involved in organised physical activities, such as sports training, during lunchtime?
   • What stops you from being physically active during lunchtime?
   • What would make you more likely to be physically active during lunchtimes at school?
   Once you have collated your survey results, as a class or group, come up with an initiative to increase student physical activity levels during lunchtimes. This could be presented to the student body or year level coordinators to be adopted throughout the school.

3. Using Google Maps or a street directory, research your local area (choose your postcode or area surrounding the school) to determine the facilities that provide opportunity for physical activity in the community.
8.6 Check and challenge

Explain
1. What is ‘advocacy’? Provide an example of advocacy that supports positive health.

Elaborate
2. Identify how the school canteen can support your health.
3. Suggest how the playground facilities at your school could be improved to better support student health.

Evaluate
4. Evaluate the role of supportive environments in improving individual health.

8.7 Review

8.7.1 Summary
- Contextual factors that influence the decisions young people make about their health are linked to the social and economic environment in which they live.
- When young people value their health, they are more likely to make positive health decisions.
- Sociocultural factors that impact on health include family, peer group, gender and culture.
- Individual factors such as levels of education, risk-taking behaviours and dietary choices impact on the health of young people.
- The communities we are part of influence our health.
- Communities provide a sense of belonging that is important to health.
- Political factors such as laws and government regulations (e.g., wearing seatbelts) are designed to protect health and keep people safe.
- The amount of money people have influences access to healthcare and people’s ability to improve their own health.
- People from low socioeconomic families have poorer health and more chronic health conditions.
- The environment in which we live has an influence on our health through education and employment opportunities, the physical resources available to promote health, and the climate.
- Marginalised groups may include Indigenous people, homeless people, minority cultural and ethnic groups and people with a disability.
- Marginalised groups are often negatively stereotyped by society.
- Marginalised groups tend to have poorer health and require greater support services to achieve better health outcomes.
- Health outcomes are improved through empowerment.
- Individual empowerment in the health context refers to an individual’s ability to make decisions about or have control over their health and wellbeing.
- Community empowerment results when individuals and organisations work together to address an identified problem.
- Advocacy is the act of championing a particular issue or cause. It is an important element in individual and community empowerment.
- Creating supportive environments can substantially improve individual and community health.
ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What influences the decisions we make about our health and risk behaviours?
How can we increase our individual empowerment and be able to take more control over our health?

Evaluate your initial response to the essential question after having studied this topic.

8.7.2 Key terms

advocacy  the act of championing or arguing for a particular issue or cause
community  group of people living or working in the same place or environment and acting collectively in the areas of social values and with shared responsibilities
community empowerment  when individuals and organisations work together to address an identified problem
determinants of health  factors that affect how healthy you are
homophobia  encompasses a range of negative attitudes and feelings toward homosexuality or people who are identified or perceived as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex
individual empowerment  an individual’s ability to make decisions about, or have control over, their health and life
marginalisation  the social process by which a person or a group of people become relegated to the fringe or edge of society
prejudice  unfavourable opinions or feelings formed without reason, knowledge or thought
sociocultural factors  factors that have an impact on people’s ability to make positive decisions about their health including their family, peer group, gender and culture
vilification  to say or write unpleasant things about someone or something, in order to cause other people to have a bad opinion of that person or thing

8.7 Check and challenge

To answer questions online and to receive immediate feedback and sample responses for every question, go to your learnON title at www.jacplus.com.au Note: Question numbers may vary slightly.

Key terms quiz  online
Multiple choice quiz  online

Check your understanding

1. Describe individual factors that influence health decision-making.
2. Discuss the impact of sociocultural factors on people’s ability to make positive health decisions.
3. Explain the connection between wealth and health.
4. Use examples to suggest how environment might impact on health.
5. What is individual empowerment? How can individual empowerment contribute to better health?
6. Explain what is meant by ‘advocating for positive health’.
7. Use an example to illustrate how supportive environments positively impact on health.

on Resources

Digital doc: Worksheet 8.6 Key terms quiz (doc-29335)
Digital doc: Worksheet 8.7 Multiple choice quiz (doc-29336)
Digital doc: Key terms glossary (doc-29337)