CONTENT STRAND: HEALTHY, SAFE AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

TOPIC 9
Health information, services and support

9.1 Overview

9.1.1 Introduction

With so much information available about how you can improve your health, how do you determine which information to absorb and apply to your own life?

Health and wellbeing should be viewed holistically; that is, encompassing all aspects including the physical, emotional, cognitive/mental, social and spiritual. In our modern society there are a range of services and support structures available for people of all ages to promote health, safety, wellbeing and physical activity levels.

In this topic you will gain the skills to analyse health information products and services, look at ways to promote young people’s rights to healthcare and support services and investigate media strategies, marketing and various influences that are associated with health issues that affect young people.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can we increase our knowledge of health, safety and wellbeing and understand the influences that may affect our ability to ensure we are able to lead healthy active lives?

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)
9.2 Health consumerism

9.2.1 The importance of literacy skills

With the increasing amount of health information available to us, the need to make appropriate health choices is ever more important. What influences us when selecting health products and how can we better understand what is being offered?

It can be difficult to be an effective health consumer. Use the Getting the brightest smile weblink in the Resources tab to watch clips containing samples of health advertisements for teeth whitening. Analyse the advertisements in relation to how accurate you believe their claims are. Discuss as a class.

The first step in becoming a more discerning consumer is to develop critical literacy skills. This involves:

• learning to read for meaning
• analysing information in relation to its context
• applying this information without being unduly influenced by values or judgements within it — in other words, not accepting everything you see or hear as fact.

Learn to be critical when reading. Consider the underlying reason for the creation of the information and examine how the information is portrayed by the author. You may read an article, for example, supporting the decriminalisation of cannabis. The fact that the article is written by someone who suffers from HIV/AIDS and finds that using the drug eases their pain and suffering will influence their perception of cannabis, as well as what is and is not written about its effects.

Developing critical literacy skills will assist you to reflect on and evaluate the health information that is delivered through media such as television, newspapers and magazines. When looking at advertisements or products, consider carefully any claims that are made about the product. When a product declares that it has 25 per cent less fat, for example, you need to ask the question: ‘With what other product is this comparison being made?’ Or when someone promoting a new diet product states that they lost 12 kilograms in six weeks, you should ask whether such rapid weight loss is likely to be maintained in the long term and whether such a diet program is nutritionally sound. Being knowledgeable about health will make it easier to assess the accuracy and legitimacy of these claims.

Resources

Weblink: Getting the brightest smile
9.2.2 Assessing health information

One of the difficulties faced by health consumers is sifting through the large volume of health information available. At times, it may feel as though you are being bombarded with information and research from various sources. What you hear and see from these sources is sometimes conflicting, adding to the confusion and uncertainty faced by health consumers. For some young people, this can be compounded by health sources using technical medical language that is hard to understand.

If you have doubts about particular health information, it is worthwhile seeking a second opinion. Talk to a qualified person about your concerns. You may feel more comfortable talking to an agency that caters specifically for young people. Alternatively, you may want to read another reliable source to double-check the information. Being well informed will enable you to feel confident in the decisions you make and less anxious about the consequences of a poor choice.

You can determine the appropriateness and accuracy of health information in a number of ways. Be prepared to ask questions to clarify what you have read or what you have been told. When you are seeing a health professional, such as a doctor, write down the main questions you wish to ask beforehand, and ask the doctor to explain information again, or in a different way, to ensure you understand the advice.

Accessing information through credible sources is another strategy for dealing with uncertainty about the accuracy of information. Government departments and specialist health agencies, such as Family Planning or the Australian Drug Foundation, can be relied on to provide accurate and up-to-date information. Information from these groups can often be accessed through youth health centres, women’s health centres, general practitioners (GPs) and other doctors or community health centres, in the form of pamphlets, brochures and factsheets.

Alternatively, most of these groups operate websites that offer information online. Other websites that focus on youth health have also been developed to provide information on the particular issues faced by young people. These websites have been developed in consultation with, or in some cases by, young people, so their language, format and presentation are youth friendly, straightforward and non-judgemental. Use the youth-specific health site weblinks in the Resources tab to explore some of these agencies.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

For some young people, particularly those in rural areas who have difficulties accessing services or those who have concerns about visiting a health service, the internet is a preferred source of information because it is cheap, convenient and anonymous. In addition, information is often accessed through magazines such as online magazine *Dolly*, and print magazines *Cosmopolitan* and *Woman’s Day*, which are just a few examples of popular publications that offer health advice. In recent years, a number of health-specific magazines have also been produced, focusing on particular issues or groups — for example, *Men’s Health*, *Women’s Health* and *Cosmetic Surgery*. 
9.2.3 Analysing websites

Critical literacy skills can be particularly useful for examining the quality, authority and accuracy of information accessed through websites, where anyone can publish and promote a point of view, product or service. Rather than simply accepting what you see or read as true, start to ask yourself questions:

- **Who wrote the information?** Check whether the information has been written by a professional person, that their credentials are provided and that these credentials can be verified (for example, an article written by the head of the Australian Medical Association).
- **Is the information accurate and up-to-date?** Check when the information was posted and when the site was last updated. Can the information be verified by other sources?
- **Why was it written?** What were the reasons for the website being created? Look at the web address for guidance on whether the site was created for commercial or promotional purposes, government purposes or educational purposes.
- **Is evidence provided to support any claims made?** Be willing to question any claims that are made about the product or service. If evidence is provided, consider its validity. If there are claims that scientific studies have found particular evidence about the product, for example, you should ask questions such as: Were a large number of people studied? Was the study conducted by qualified professionals? Have other studies found similar results?
- **Is anyone likely to benefit financially from the information?** If certain services or products are being advertised, then the information will obviously be favourable towards them. A report on a particular brand of skin cream that is written by a researcher working for the company and published on their home page, for example, will be seeking to promote the product. Similarly, if the site is sponsored by a particular company, then the information could be biased.

9.2.4 Analysing popular culture

Critical literacy skills should also be applied to the messages presented in popular culture about health-related issues. Think, for example, about the messages conveyed in movies about drug use or sexual relationships. Are these images an accurate reflection of reality? Do they show both the positive and negative effects of behaviours such as smoking, drinking too much alcohol or having unplanned sex? Consider social media profiles and ask yourself, ‘Is it an informative perception of the influencer’s real life and the health activities they participate in?’ or ‘Is it an accurate reflection of their level of wellbeing?’ Learning to question these images, brands or celebrities and the information associated with them will help you to assess whether characters portrayed in movies, television, music and online provide useful role models for your own health decisions. At the same time, critically reflecting on how people are portrayed will allow you to challenge stereotypical expectations of young people’s behaviour.
9.2 Activities

Health advertisements
1. (a) Use the Isagenix weblink in the Resources tab and choose a product pack to analyse. In groups of three, develop a set of criteria that could be used to examine the claims made about the chosen health product. Swap your criteria with another group.
(b) Using the criteria provided to you by the other group, analyse the product’s claims. Discuss how effectively the criteria allowed you to critically assess the claims made. Provide feedback on the developed criteria to the other group.

Using the internet for health information
2. In small groups, discuss the benefits and risks of using the internet as a source of health information. Identify strategies for reducing the risks associated with accessing information and advice online.

Evaluating a health website
3. Use the Healthy living Fact sheet index weblink in the Resources tab to access the Better Health Channel’s health fact sheets index. You will need to navigate to the ‘healthy living’ section and browse by topics to find fact sheets for this task. Investigate three fact sheets that provide information that might be of interest to you. Write a one paragraph review about each sheet; discuss the ease or difficulty in accessing the information, your understanding of the information and how relevant the website might be to people wishing to increase their knowledge of specific health issues.

Evaluating news stories about health
4. Form groups of three. Identify issues from the news or current affairs programs that relate to health; for example, a new diet or cancer treatment. You can use the Health report weblinks in the Resources tab to view a clip discussing a health issue to help with your discussion. Evaluate how you establish the accuracy of the information and value to you as a consumer.

Gender messages
5. Visit the Women’s Health and Men’s Health weblinks in the Resources tab. Scroll down and simply view the main articles without clicking on any of the links. Observe the titles of each of them and what each article is about. What can you observe about the main ideas or messages on the Women’s Health site compared to the Men’s Health site?
What kind of impact do these messages have for women as opposed to men? What kind of behaviours might it encourage or what is the message being sent about how women and men should be perceived as being?
Does it have an impact on mental health and not just physical health? Are there different messages about participation in different types of physical activity and WHY each gender participates in them? Is it equitable? Present your findings to the class.
9.2 Check and challenge

**Explain**
1. Explain the role the internet has played in changing people’s health knowledge.
2. Outline appropriate strategies that can be used when you are uncertain about the accuracy of health information.
3. Explain why it is important to develop critical literacy skills.
4. Explain how the media can influence people’s health choices.
5. Explain how you would determine if information found on the internet was from a credible source.

**Elaborate**
6. Describe four difficulties that young people face when trying to locate accurate health information.
7. Describe sources of health information available in your local area.
8. Use the Glogster weblink in the Resources tab to ‘glog’ or design an electronic poster that encourages young people to access reliable health information in relation to one health issue affecting adolescents. Some suggested issues include sexual health, road safety, drug abuse and mental health.

**Evaluate**
9. Evaluate the connection between improved education and positive lifestyle choices.
10. Use the Website review weblink in the Resources tab to choose a fact sheet on a youth health issue. Evaluate whether the website it comes from is credible and write a short report describing the type of information it contains.
9.3 Influences on selecting health products and services

Your selection of health products is influenced by many factors including health professionals, family, friends, media and even your culture.

9.3.1 Medical professionals

The decisions we make as health consumers are influenced by more than just our level of knowledge and our ability to critically analyse information. A number of other groups and factors have the potential to impact on our decision to select particular health products and services. What factors influence your health decisions?

Your particular health issue will influence the type of health product and health professional you choose. General practitioners are usually a good starting point for most health issues because they are trained to help with a wide range of health problems, although pharmacists and community nurses may also be able to assist with some basic problems. You may also choose to consult a healthcare professional who specialises in a particular area, such as a dietitian to help develop a nutritionally sound diet if you are anaemic, or a drug counsellor if you are experiencing problems with cannabis. Remember to use only qualified professionals to ensure you receive quality health treatment and care.

9.3.2 Friends and family

Peers and family may also offer suggestions on health products and services that they believe are useful. You may find the advice of your peers and family is helpful when you need to access a health service. Ask your friends or family about who they trust and would recommend. You may want to try these services first and see whether you feel comfortable using them.

Although you may feel comfortable talking with your friends about matters such as sexual activity, drug use or family hassles, it is important that you recognise the limitations of the advice they are able to provide. Friends and family might lack the technical knowledge and expertise to fully comprehend your problem and give you individually appropriate advice. Their knowledge may be based on hearsay, personal experiences or unreliable information from others, or it may not be up-to-date. While some of their suggestions may be helpful for short-term or minor health problems, such as a cold, professional advice should always be sought when problems are more severe or ongoing.

9.3.3 Media

The media can have a powerful influence on whether we buy health products and the choice of product that we purchase. Health and lifestyle magazines such as Cleo, Dolly, Men’s Health and Cosmopolitan, and social media sites such as Instagram where ‘social influencers’ are prominent, are full of advertisements promoting
beauty products, weight loss programs, vitamins and herbal remedies. It is important to critically examine any claims made in these advertisements about the health benefits the products provide. Although many of these products assert that they are scientifically or clinically tested, often little information is provided to allow any claims to be proven. Where supporting information is presented, it is frequently full of scientific or medical jargon that is designed to impress readers and add credibility to the claims.

The media can have a powerful influence on people’s health decisions.

Think about any websites or social media influencers you follow. Why do you follow them? What image of health is created on that website or page?

There are many different strategies employed by companies to lure young people into certain websites or to follow celebrities or ‘influencers’. These strategies might be used to entice the reader to buy a product, dress a certain way, eat a particular food or engage in a particular type of behaviour.

Media influence on teenagers can be deliberate; for example, advertising is often directed at children and teenagers. This means that children and teenagers are increasingly conscious of brands and images.

Media influence can also be more indirect. An example of this might be the increasing sexualisation of content in advertising, magazines, television shows and music videos. These media products often show ‘sexy’ women with unrealistic body types. These indirect media influences can suggest to teenagers that these are ‘normal’ ways to look and behave.

Body image is influenced by many factors. These include family environment, ability or disability, peer attitudes, the fashion industry and cultural background, as well as mainstream media, social media and advertising.

If teenagers see unrealistic ‘thin’ or ‘muscly’ body types often enough, it can have an impact on their body image and dieting behaviour. This is especially true when there is no-one to disagree with messages like ‘thin is beautiful’.

Teenagers can also pick up important health promotion messages from the media; for example, messages aimed at preventing youth depression and suicide, encouraging healthy eating and lifestyle habits, and promoting positive, respectful relationships.

Media influence can be powerful if a celebrity role model says a particular lifestyle, product or behaviour is good. There are lots of examples of celebrities whose lifestyles, values and behaviour provide positive examples. The hard work and success of these role models can be inspirational.

Children and teenagers do need to be aware that some celebrities are paid to advertise the products they endorse.
Celebrities can have a positive influence on young people.

9.3.4 Culture and status

**Culture** can also play a role in the selection of health products and services. Certain cultures have traditional remedies that differ from those advocated by Western medicine, such as using herbal medications or acupuncture (used in many Asian countries). Certain religious or cultural beliefs and practices may also preclude the use of particular products or services. It is important that you discuss your religious or cultural beliefs with your health practitioner to enable them to be more sensitive to your needs.

**Socioeconomic status** also has implications for people’s choices of health products and services. Socially disadvantaged groups may find it difficult to access services that provide free or affordable assistance and information, so their choices may be limited. Although the cost of certain prescription drugs is subsidised through the pharmaceutical benefits scheme (PBS), other health products such as sunscreen, over-the-counter medications and vitamin supplements are not subsidised.

**HEALTH FACT**

Honey and lemon flavoured teas and cough drops which are sold to help relieve a sore throat are based on a herbal recipe. The citric acid in lemon juice can help kill the bacteria that are causing the pain, while the honey gives immediate relief by providing a soothing effect.

9.3 Activities

**The media’s effect on health decisions**

1. (a) Look through one of the following magazines: *Dolly* (online only), *Girlfriend*, *Men’s Health*, *Women’s Health* or *Woman’s Day*. Record the number and types of:
   i. health products advertised in the magazine
   ii. health products promoted through articles or features in the magazine
   iii. health services promoted through articles or features in the magazine.
(b) Identify any particular types of product that are predominantly promoted through the magazine.
(c) Do you think this type of magazine would affect people’s choices about health products and services? Explain.
(d) Discuss and compare your findings with those of a partner who studied a different magazine. Note any differences in the types of product targeted at different audiences.

Gender and the media
2. Consider the following images. Use the **Girls make your move** weblink in the Resources tab to learn about this campaign and complete the activities below.
(a) After visiting the website, in small groups discuss what the aim of this campaign is and why you think it was introduced.
(b) In what ways could this campaign have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of females in the community?
(c) Discuss the relevance of a campaign like this in your community. Do you think it will increase female activity participation? Do you think it sends a positive or negative message to young females? Share your group’s views with the class.

![Girls make your move](https://www.girlsmove.gov.au)

Gender and society’s expectations
3. Society and certain cultures often stereotype males as strong and tough. Males may then avoid accessing medical products and services because they might be perceived as weak. Use the **Masculinity and mental health** weblink to read the article and then answer the following questions.
(a) According to Chama Kay, what do parents sometimes call young boys who show vulnerability?
(b) What stopped Daniel Briggs from seeking help for so many years?
(c) Robert Smith has a different view on stigmas surrounding mental health. What is it?
(d) Why does Tom Ogier believe that men feel they can’t open up?
(e) What is the general consensus of the men interviewed of how society perceives how men/boys should be?
(f) For what illnesses or health issues in particular do men seem to avoid seeking help? Why might this be?
(g) Men are often seen as being the ‘breadwinner’ or having the responsibility to bring in an income to their home. While this notion is slowly changing, how do you think this affects men and their mental health?
(h) In groups, your teacher will give you 3 minutes to make a mind map of what comes to mind when you think of the male gender. List as many words as possible that come to mind. Present this to the class.

(i) In those same groups, come up with your own ad campaign that could be used to encourage males to seek help or information from health services when they need it.

The media and physical activity

4. In section 9.3.3 you saw images of celebrities who have had a positive influence on young people. Ellen has promoted positive mental health for LGBTQI youth; Kurt Fearnley is a role model for people with disabilities; Turia Pitt has promoted positive body image and resilience among people of all ages, particularly females; and Anh Do is a role model for resilience and dealing with adversity.

Out of these four role models, Turia Pitt and Kurt Fearnley are of particular note when it comes to physical activity. Both athletes have had to overcome obstacles to be able to compete in their respective sporting events and are an example of where the media can have a positive influence on the involvement of people of all abilities, ages and gender in physical activities.

How do you think Turia Pitt’s and Kurt Fearnley’s stories have influenced health behaviours of all young people?

5. Research campaigns with messages about the importance of physical activity, outdoor recreation and sport and create a poster to present to the class. Your poster should include:
   - details of the website(s) where you found your information
   - details of the campaign or organisation
   - what the message is concerned with (physical activity, outdoor recreational activities or participation in sport)
   - how you believe this campaign or organisation may influence the health behaviours and actions of young people.

Examples of sporting and physical activity campaigns in Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Small Steps Can Make a Big Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOVE IT AUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAKE HEALTHY NORMAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individuals, communities and physical activity

6. Devise a timeline of local sporting and physical opportunities that are available in your local area. Then put them into a table that represents age group brackets such as 2–7, 8–15, 16 onwards.

7. Use the parkrun weblink to learn more about this free weekly event that is a timed 5 km run (or walk) that encourages participation. You only compete against yourself and it is available worldwide.

(a) Investigate the idea behind parkrun and explain how it could be appealing to almost all areas of Australian society regardless of age or socioeconomic background. You may consider things such as cost, required equipment, transferability (how many localities this free membership exists in within Australia and worldwide) and pressure to compete (where, in your opinion would the pressure to improve come from?).

(b) What other examples are in your area that encourage participation and health?

Resources

- Weblink: Girls make your move
- Weblink: Masculinity and mental health
- Weblink: parkrun
9.3 Check and challenge

**Explain**
1. Explain the impact of the media on physical activity, health and wellbeing for young people.
2. Explain why some people have a preference for herbal over mainstream medicines.

**Elaborate**
3. Describe some of the possible limitations of the health advice that friends and families can provide.
4. Identify the different types of information available from a pharmacist and a doctor.
5. Use an example to discuss the influences of the media on the selection of cosmetic health products and services.

**Evaluate**
6. Evaluate the role that culture can play in people's health decisions.

9.4 Your rights and responsibilities as a health consumer

As a health consumer you have rights such as access and fair treatment without harassment or discrimination. You also have responsibilities, which help ensure you receive the most appropriate treatment for any health concerns.

9.4.1 Your health rights

Rights and responsibilities work in tandem. Being aware of your rights and responsibilities in matters relating to health is important. If we want the best, we must also be prepared to supply information as required and work cooperatively with health personnel to get the best result.

As a health consumer, you need to be aware of your rights. You have the right to expect certain standards of healthcare, including:

- being able to see qualified health personnel accompanied by a support person should you choose to do so
- being treated with dignity and respect
- your health and personal details being kept confidential, unless your practitioner is required by law to pass information on to another person or authority, or you give permission for information to be released
- services that are free from physical and mental abuse, coercion, harassment and discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, race, family status, sexual orientation or disability
- services that account for your cultural, religious, social and ethnic needs, values and beliefs

---

You can give informed consent for medical treatment after you have received information about the health services and treatment options that are available to you.
• free emergency treatment at a public hospital
• information on where health services and treatment are available, if they are not available locally.

If you need treatment, you need to think carefully about the information given and then make a decision about the treatment that you want to receive. This is called giving informed consent. Generally, no medical treatment is provided without your ‘informed consent’ once you are over 14 years of age.

9.4.2 Your health responsibilities

Along with your rights as a health consumer, you also need to accept some responsibilities to ensure you receive quality service. Many of these responsibilities involve you communicating openly and working in partnership with the healthcare provider so that you receive the best care.

It is your responsibility to:
• know your medical history and inform your doctor about any medication or herbal treatments you are using or allergies that you have. If you smoke, drink or have recently used illegal drugs, you should let your health practitioner know.
• be honest and open in your answers even though you may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable discussing things such as drug use or your sexual orientation. Your health professional will need a clear and accurate picture of your health status and any behaviours that may affect it.
• be actively involved in your healthcare by asking questions. If you are diagnosed with a particular condition, try to be fully informed about the condition and the treatment options, including non-medicinal or alternative therapies. Do your own research by asking your doctor for reading material or by accessing information through reliable websites or at the local library.
• take medication according to the instructions provided by your doctor and follow the treatment plan that is developed for you. If this treatment causes any unpleasant or unexpected side effects, make sure that you tell your doctor.

HEALTH FACT

Many of your health rights are protected by law. If you believe that you have been denied any of these rights or you are not happy with the quality of care you have received, you are entitled to complain.

It is a good idea to first talk to the healthcare provider about your concerns. If you feel worried or uncomfortable about doing this on your own, a number of people can help you. These include:
• patient representatives in some hospitals
• a friend, family member or other support person such as a youth worker
• patient support officers from the Health Care Complaints Commission.

In New South Wales, the Health Care Complaints Commission deals with these types of complaints. You may also want to see a different healthcare provider.
9.4 Activities

Don't lie to your doctor

1. Use the [Honesty is the best policy](/weblink) weblink in the Resources tab to read the article ‘Lie to your doctor; fool yourself’, then answer the following questions.

   (a) Why would some people not be honest with their doctor?
   (b) Identify issues that may be difficult to discuss and where the full truth may not always be forthcoming.
   (c) Is it responsible to consult a doctor and not be prepared to reveal all about a complaint or illness?
   (d) Discuss if a doctor should be held responsible if a patient’s HIV was not diagnosed because the patient withheld information that he felt was too embarrassing to reveal.
   (e) Comment on responsibility in regard to a patient feigning an illness to obtain a sick leave certificate.
   (f) A group of students appear to be getting a rash. They sent one to a doctor to get antibiotics that they can all share. Identify all areas where failure to act responsibly is evident. Why would this be irresponsible behaviour?

9.4 Check and challenge

**Explain**

1. Outline the basic rights you are entitled to when receiving healthcare.
2. What is ‘informed consent’?
3. Describe your responsibilities as a health consumer.

**Elaborate**

4. Imagine that your family has moved to a different state. You become ill and your new doctor wants to know your medical history. Do you accurately know all about yourself — vaccinations, diseases, illnesses and medications? Summarise what you know and write a short list of things you don’t know. Ask your doctor about these things at your next check-up.

9.5 Accessing health products and services

Issues relating to trust, confidentiality, knowledge, availability and personal skills are important in influencing your access to health products and services.

**9.5.1 Challenges with accessing health products and services**

Despite the array of health information, products and services that are generally available, accessing them can be a challenging task for some young people. A number of factors sometimes hinder their ability to access and use the full range of services and products that exist. However, better understanding of support services can make you a more informed consumer.

Not everybody in Australia has the same level of access to health services and products. To improve access to remote communities in Australia, the Royal Flying Doctor Service represents a valuable means of support.
How does this service provide healthcare to those in remote communities? Use the Royal Flying Doctor Service weblink in the Resources tab to find out.

**Resources**

Weblink: Royal Flying Doctor Service

---

**9.5.2 Confidentiality and trust in healthcare**

Concerns about confidentiality can affect the willingness of some young people to seek appropriate care and support from health agencies. **Confidentiality** refers to someone respecting your privacy by keeping secret whatever you tell them. Being able to speak openly about your personal problems and concerns is a very important part of your relationship with your health practitioner.

Health professionals, such as GPs and counsellors, are required by law to keep most issues that you discuss with them confidential. They must, however, pass on information they have been told when they believe your safety or the safety of other people is at serious risk. Your age may make a difference to whether the health professional needs to report what you have said.

Generally, a health professional will tell you about any limitations to confidentiality before you start to discuss anything that may be sensitive. If you are concerned that something you say may have to be reported, ask about the types of situation that must be reported and to whom. Health professionals are there to help you. Talking openly and honestly will enable them to understand your concerns and provide the most appropriate advice.

Having a strong sense of trust in the support and advice of health services can be particularly important when the issues involved relate to sexual activity, mental health or drug use. For some groups, such as same-sex attracted young people and Indigenous young people, seeking advice and support can be particularly difficult because they fear being judged or misunderstood.

Telephone counselling services, such as the Kids Helpline, provide another option for young people unable to, or unsure about, accessing face-to-face support. Online counselling services have also been introduced by the Kids Helpline as a further means of offering health advice and support that is cheap, anonymous and easily accessible.
9.5.3 How to find health services

In major cities and towns, a range of health agencies are generally accessible to provide support for both general and specific health problems. Some health agencies offer access to a number of health professionals, such as GPs, counsellors and mental health workers, making it easy and convenient to obtain the appropriate help. Community health centres, women’s health centres and youth health centres, for example, often provide a range of health services in one building.

While offering choice, the availability of so many health services can sometimes make it difficult to determine who is the best person to see. A useful starting point can be friends, family or your local GP. A trusted teacher or your school counsellor can be other good sources of information on appropriate local health services. Credible websites can provide you with a list of local services, or you can use the local Yellow Pages to look up ‘youth’ or ‘community health’. You might also like to use the internet to research the background of different health professionals, to learn about who may be the most appropriate person or service.

You can obtain information about health services from various sources.

HEALTH FACT

You are entitled to apply for your own Medicare card from the age of 15. You will need two forms of identification, such as your birth certificate, passport, school photo ID or proof of age card. Application forms are available from Medicare offices online, or you can ring Medicare on 132 011.
DID YOU KNOW?
Sexual Health Clinics are located throughout New South Wales and offer free and confidential STI testing, treatment and information. You do not need your Medicare card. Professional nurses, counsellors and interpreters are on staff. Condoms are available for no cost and they also offer needle exchange programs. For more information call the Sexual Health Infolink on 1800 451 624. You can use the Family planning weblink in the Resources tab to find out more information about these clinics and what they offer.

9.5.4 Obstacles to accessing health
Compared with less developed countries, Australia is generally well resourced in terms of health agencies and services. However, certain groups remain disadvantaged in relation to the health services and products they can access. Residential rehabilitation programs for young people with drug problems, for example, are very limited. For people in rural and remote areas, considerably fewer services are conveniently located and regularly available to them.

The issue of limited health services for young people in rural and remote areas is compounded by concerns about their privacy. The stigma associated with health issues such as mental illness, along with concerns about possible local gossip, can create barriers that prevent young people in small rural towns from accessing those health services and products that are available. Young people may feel uncomfortable, for example, purchasing health products such as condoms. Young people old enough to drive may be able to visit a service in a nearby area, but this option is not always possible for those without access to transport.

9.5.5 Skills to access health
Interpersonal skills may influence a choice to actively seek out information or help with a health issue. The development of skills such as decision-making, communicating, help-seeking and problem-solving, will assist young people to feel more empowered and confident to access appropriate health services.

Research has also suggested that gender differences may affect access to health information and services. Females are generally more likely to discuss concerns about their health and ask for help in the early stages of a problem, whereas males are more reluctant to talk about these concerns or seek help unless the problem is severe.
9.5 Activities

Local services
1. (a) In groups of three, investigate the services available in your local area to support young people in relation to the health issues listed below. For each service, find out its address, telephone number, the website or Facebook page, the target group it supports and any costs involved in using the service. Where services are not available, locate a toll-free number or web service that may be of assistance.
   - Drug and alcohol issues
   - Mental health problems
   - Crisis accommodation
   - Family conflict
   - Sexuality issues
   - Sexually transmitted infections
   - Sexual assault
   - Support for pregnant or parenting students
(b) Design a method of informing young people about these local services, the support they offer and their contact details — for example, a brochure, help card or web page.
(c) Present your findings to your class and include an evaluation of how appropriate each service is in providing advice and support for young people.

Using healthcare services
2. In groups of three, imagine that you have been invited to be the youth representatives on a local committee that is examining the use of health services by young people.
   (a) In this role, discuss why young people in your local area find it difficult to access health services. In particular, consider the effects of:
      - age
      - gender
      - geographical location
      - disability
      - cultural background.
(b) Prepare a short report that outlines these difficulties and proposes strategies to encourage greater use of health services by young people. Present your report to the class, using PowerPoint or overheads.

Appropriateness of health services
3. Investigate the health websites for young people listed below and answer the following questions.
   - ReachOut
   - beyondblue
   - Kids Helpline
   - Butterfly Foundation
   - Healthy Active Kids
   (a) What health and support services do they provide?
   (b) What health-related issues is the website addressing?
   (c) Discuss the appropriateness of the website for young people in accessing health information.

Stand up for youth!
4. In groups, identify a key health issue from the list below. Using Prezi, make a presentation that can raise awareness and increase support for the issue.
   Health issues may include:
   - access to sexual health services
   - mental health support services
   - physical activity support (targeting the rise in obesity in young people)
   - body image and self-esteem among teenagers
   - drug use and teenagers.
Inequity and accessibility

5. headspace is a national organisation that focuses on supporting people with mental health issues. Take a look at the map below.

![Map of headspace centres]

This is a map of headspace centres. Use the **headspace locations** web link in the Resources tab for a more detailed version. You will notice that there seems to be an abundance of centres by the coastline, but as the distance from the coast increases, there are less available.

(a) Why do you think this is?

(b) What impact do you think this has on people living in these areas

Other groups that experience inequity in terms of health services available include LGBTQI people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

(c) Choose one group from the list above (you can use rural and remote people if you want to just choose a different community group) and complete the following steps.

   i Identify the areas that this service is available and mark it on a map of New South Wales.

   ii Is there any links with this level of accessibility and health issues in these towns?

   iii What health issues could this cause?

   iv In your groups, write a letter to the local council or state government outlining the health issues this inequity creates. Include in your letter a proposal for how you think the council/government could improve these issues to promote greater inclusiveness and accessibility.

---

**Resources**

- Digital doc: Worksheet 9.5 What do I want from my healthcare provider? (doc-29297)
- Weblink: ReachOut
- Weblink: beyondblue
- Weblink: Kids Helpline
- Weblink: Butterfly Foundation
- Weblink: Healthy Active Kids
- Weblink: Prezi
- Weblink: headspace locations
9.5 Check and challenge

Explain
1. Explain what is meant by confidentiality. Why is it an important part of a patient–health professional relationship?
2. Explain the limitations to confidentiality.

Elaborate
3. Describe ways in which you can locate health services in your local area.
4. Medicare falls under Australia’s Government Funding Scheme. The aim of Medicare is to give all Australians access to healthcare despite their personal circumstances. Use the Child Dental Benefits Schedule weblink in the Resources tab to access details about the Medicare Teen Dental Plan. Describe who is eligible, what the entitlements are and the steps involved in receiving your benefit.

Evaluate
5. Evaluate the connection between trust in a health professional and better healthcare.

Resources

Weblink: Child Dental Benefits Schedule

9.6 Review

9.6.1 Summary

- There has been a rapid growth in health knowledge, products and services. As a result, consumers need to become more informed and discerning.
- Research, education, access to information and willingness to discuss problems has contributed to improved health knowledge.
- One way of becoming a more informed consumer is to improve our critical literacy skills.
- Not all of what we see on a website is necessarily true. All health information found from internet sources needs to be critically evaluated.
- Peers, family, media, culture and socioeconomic factors all influence our selection of health products and services.
- We all need to know our rights as consumers.
- We all have responsibilities as health consumers.
- Confidentiality together with a sense of trust and comfort are important when accessing healthcare.
- Our interpersonal skills are important when seeking out information that relates to health issues.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can we increase our knowledge of health, safety and wellbeing and understand the influences that may affect our ability to ensure we are able to lead healthy active lives?

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

- **coercion** the action or practice of persuading someone to do something by using force or threats
- **confidentiality** a patient's right to have the information they have given to their health professional kept private
- **credentials** a qualification, achievement, quality, or aspect of a person's background, especially when used to indicate their suitability for something
- **critical literacy** the ability to read critically to determine the meaning of information, understand why the information has been created and analyse how it has been presented
- **culture** the ideas, customs and social behaviour of a society
- **general practitioners** a doctor trained to deal with a wide range of health problems and issues
- **health consumer** a person who accesses a healthcare provider or service or who purchases health-related products
- **informed consent** the considered decision you make about your health treatment — it requires that you are fully informed about all treatment options and risks before making a decision
- **media** television, newspapers, radio, film and the internet that are used to communicate with large numbers of people
- **social media** the online media used for social networking, such as emailing, blogging or tweeting over the internet
- **socioeconomic status** a person's overall social position or standing

9.6 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**

**Multiple choice quiz**

**Check your understanding**

1. Identify decisions that young people might need to make in relation to choices about health products and services.
2. Explain why consumers now have an improved knowledge of health.
3. Discuss how we can more accurately assess health information on websites.
4. Explain the role of developing critical literacy skills in evaluating health information and services.
5. Discuss how the media can influence our selection of health products and services.
6. Explain your rights and responsibilities as a health consumer.
7. Explain ways by which you can better evaluate health products and services.
8. Identify the role of interpersonal skills in accessing health products and services.

**Resources**

- Digital doc: Worksheet 9.6 Key terms quiz (doc-29298)
- Digital doc: Worksheet 9.7 Multiple choice quiz (doc-29299)
- Digital doc: Key terms glossary (doc-29300)