

Social Determinants of Health

Many factors affect our health. Health Canada identifies 12 determinants of health, which are often further broken down into what are referred to as the 'social determinants of health'.

While all of the determinants interact to affect health, there is increasing evidence to demonstrate that the social determinants predict the greatest proportion of variance in health status. The social determinants include but are not limited to:



- a) Income inequality
- b) Social inclusion and exclusion
- c) Employment and job security
- d) Working conditions
- e) Early childhood care
- f) Education
- g) Food security
- h) Housing

a) Income inequality impacts health:

- Regular, adequate income = good nutrition and a healthy place to live
- Provides a practical means to cope with difficulties
- Higher income is associated with better health

b) Social inclusion promotes health:

- People are social by nature
- Inclusion increases one's ability to deal with adversity
- Happens when groups form
- Provides a sense of community and belonging

c) Employment and job security support health:

- A good job; adequate income
- Affects health and self-esteem
- Provides practical means to contribute and be part of society

d) Working conditions shape health:

- People who have more control over their work have better health
- Social organization of work, management styles and social relationships in the workplace affect health

- e) **Early childhood care** affects health:
- Early child development affects long-term health
 - Adverse socio-economic conditions in early life can lead to increased health risks in adulthood
 - Disadvantaged children and youth do not perform as well in school as advantaged young people
- f) **Education** improves health:
- Access to life long learning opportunities
 - Ability to interact purposefully in our world
 - Higher education increases opportunities for income and job security
- g) **Food security** determines health:
- Food is a basic human need
 - An adequate diet and food supply are central to good health
 - We each have the right to access adequate amounts of safe, nutritious, culturally appropriate food
- h) **Housing** influences health:
- Housing is a necessity of life, a healthy environment = personal health
 - A lack of affordable, acceptable housing leads to exclusion from community networks and mainstream patterns of day-to-day life
 - We each have the right to a safe, healthy and affordable place to live

