

Introduction to Primary Healthcare

Introduction to Primary Healthcare

(A concise, easy-to-read overview for students, health professionals, or anyone interested in the basics of primary care.)

1. What Is Primary Healthcare?

Aspect	Description
Definition	The first level of contact individuals, families, and communities have with the health system. It provides comprehensive, accessible, community-oriented care that addresses most health needs throughout life.
Core Goals	• Promote health and prevent disease • Provide curative and rehabilitative services • Coordinate care across the health system
Key Characteristics	• Accessibility – geographically close, affordable, culturally appropriate • Continuity – long-term relationship with a care provider or team • Comprehensiveness – addresses a wide range of health problems (acute, chronic, preventive, mental health, maternal-child health, etc.) • Coordination – links to secondary/tertiary care, social services, and public health programs

2. Historical Milestones

Year	Event	Impact
1978	Alma-Ata Declaration (International Conference on Primary Health Care)	Established primary health care as the cornerstone of “Health for All” and introduced the four pillars : health promotion, disease prevention, curative care, and rehabilitation.
1990s	Selective Primary Health Care (e.g., GOBI-F)	Focused on cost-effective, high-impact interventions (Growth monitoring, Oral rehydration, Breastfeeding, Immunization, Family planning).

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Year	Event	Impact
2000s	Universal Health Coverage (UHC) agenda	Recognized primary care as essential for achieving UHC—ensuring that all people receive needed health services without financial hardship.
2018	WHO’s “Primary Health Care – Transforming Vision”	Calls for stronger integration with public health, digital health, and community participation.

3. Components of Primary Healthcare

1. Health Promotion & Disease Prevention

- Immunizations, health education, screening programs, lifestyle counseling, environmental health actions.

2. Curative Services

- Diagnosis and treatment of common acute conditions (e.g., infections, injuries).
- Management of chronic diseases (e.g., hypertension, diabetes, asthma).

3. Rehabilitation & Palliative Care

- Early rehab for functional recovery, support for chronic disabling conditions, end-of-life care.

4. Community & Public Health Integration

- Surveillance, outbreak response, health-in-all-policies, collaboration with schools, workplaces, NGOs.

5. Health System Functions

- **Governance:** policies, regulation, quality assurance.
 - **Financing:** equitable funding mechanisms (e.g., capitation, insurance, government budgets).
 - **Workforce:** multidisciplinary teams (physicians, nurses, midwives, community health workers, pharmacists, allied health).
 - **Information Systems:** electronic medical records, registries, telehealth platforms.
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4. The Primary Care Team

Role	Typical Responsibilities
Family Physician / General Practitioner	First point of contact, comprehensive assessment, continuity of care, referral coordination.
Nurse Practitioner / Primary Care Nurse	Health promotion, chronic disease monitoring, minor procedures, patient education.
Midwife	Antenatal care, delivery support, postnatal follow-up, family planning.
Community Health Worker (CHW)	Outreach