

Introduction to Community Health

Introduction to Community Health

Key concepts, goals, and foundational principles for anyone studying public health, nursing, social work, or related fields.

1. What Is Community Health?

Aspect	Description
Definition	The science and practice of promoting, protecting, and improving the health of groups of people who share a common geographic area, culture, or interest.
Scope	Encompasses disease prevention, health promotion, health education, and the organization of health services at the community level.
Levels of Intervention	- Primary (prevent disease before it occurs) - Secondary (early detection & treatment) - Tertiary (rehabilitation & reducing complications)
Key Stakeholders	Residents, community leaders, local government, NGOs, health?care providers, schools, businesses, and media.

2. Core Principles

Principle	Practical Meaning
Population?based focus	Target health outcomes for the whole group, not just individuals.
Equity & Social Justice	Reduce health disparities by addressing social determinants (income, education, housing, etc.).
Community Participation	Involve residents in planning, decision?making, and evaluation of programs.
Prevention?oriented	Emphasize upstream actions that stop problems before they start.
Cultural Competence	Tailor interventions to the values, beliefs, and practices of the community.
Intersectoral Collaboration	Work across education, transportation, housing, environment, and other sectors.

Introduction to Community Health

3. Determinants of Community Health

Category	Examples
Biological	Genetics, age, sex
Behavioral	Tobacco use, diet, physical activity
Social/Economic	Income, education, employment, social support
Physical Environment	Air/water quality, housing, neighborhood safety
Health Services	Access to care, quality of care, health insurance
Policy & Governance	Laws, regulations, public policies that shape health resources

*The **social determinants of health (SDOH)** are the most powerful drivers of health inequities.*

4. Community Health Assessment (CHA)

A systematic process to identify health needs, resources, and priorities.

1. **Define the Community** – geographic boundaries, demographic profile, cultural groups.
2. **Collect Data**
 - **Quantitative:** morbidity/mortality statistics, surveys, vital records.
 - **Qualitative:** focus groups, key informant interviews, community forums.
3. **Analyze Data** – identify trends, gaps, and high-risk populations.
4. **Prioritize Issues** – use criteria such as severity, feasibility, community concern.
5. **Report Findings** – clear, visual (charts, maps) and accessible to all stakeholders.

Tools: GIS mapping, SWOT analysis, the PRECEDE-PROCEED model.

5. Planning & Implementing Community Health Programs

Step	Action
1. Set Goals & Objectives	SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).
2. Choose Evidence-Based Strategies	Review literature, best-practice guidelines, successful local models.

Introduction to Community Health

Step

Action

3. Develop an Intervention Plan

Define activities, responsible parties, timelines, and required resources.

4. Mobilize Resources

Funding (grants, local budgets), staff, volunteers, materials.

5. Execute

Deliver