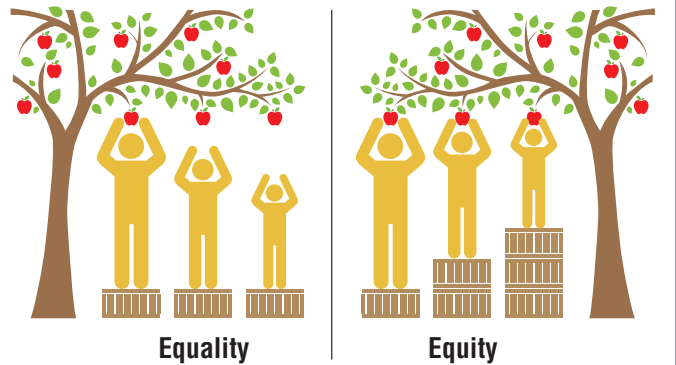


Health Equity

These days you hear more and more about *health equity* and *health equality*. People are talking about improving access to healthcare and addressing the different needs of our diverse population. This fact sheet gives you an overview of these issues and how you can be part of the solution.



Definition of terms

“Health equality”: everyone gets the same care regardless of individual situations.

Examples of health equality:

- Reducing cost of a medication for all patients.
- Assuring that everyone has a way to travel to get to their medical care.

“Health equity” or “equity in health”: everyone has a fair access to resources and opportunity to be healthy. Being healthy includes both physical and psychological/emotional well-being.

Examples of health equity:

- Charging patients based on ability to pay.
- Providing evening or weekend hours so people who are too busy in the day can still get health care.

“Health literacy” means that people understand their health and medical care and use this information to make healthy choices for themselves and their families. Health literacy is much more than reading and writing.

<https://onlinepublichealth.gwu.edu/resources/equity-vs-equality/>

Health equity and health equality do not mean the same thing. Health equity means providing everyone with the resources they need to obtain health. When there are barriers to obtaining health, we want to provide health equity to find a way for each person to overcome these barriers.

Factors affecting health equity

Many things can affect your ability to be healthy. Systems may treat people different based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, disability, or their social and financial status in society. Culture and traditions also can have a way of shaping our views and approach to healthcare.

Different groups of people face different challenges in getting healthcare. Some examples of factors that can make it difficult to be healthy include:

1. Access to safe, fair-paying jobs and fair-priced education
2. Access to safe and affordable housing
3. Access to healthy food
4. Having a way to travel to the clinic for a regular check-up
5. Access to affordable healthcare
6. Being able to understand your medical diagnosis and treatment (health literacy)

There is a complex relationship between health equity of people and their surroundings. You can think about the factors that affect health equity in these four categories (adapted from Ref. 3):

In an ideal world, healthcare providers, government and society can make a huge impact on our ability to be healthy. But there are things you can do to improve your personal health.

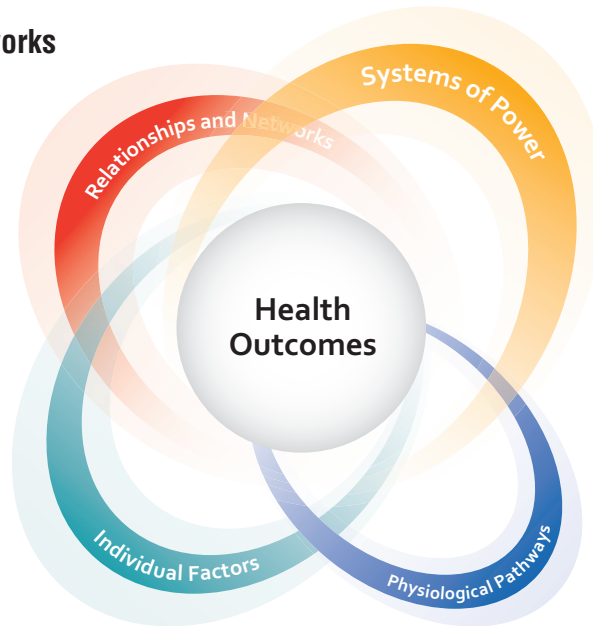
Relationships and Networks

Connections between family, friends, partners, community, school and work.

Individual Factors

A person's response to the people and surroundings

Examples: values, beliefs, past experiences



Systems of Power

Policies, rules and laws that affect access to resources that impact our health.

Physiological Pathways

Physical and emotional health, and your ability to think clearly

Examples: chronic conditions that weaken your immune system

Figure adapted from ETR "Health Equity Framework"

How you can improve your personal health

- Talk to your healthcare provider about what you need and what makes it hard for you to be as healthy as you can be.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. Expect answers you can understand—without medical jargon that most people may not be familiar with.
- Look for ways to improve your health in your daily life
 - eat healthy foods, ○ exercise, and
 - get enough sleep, ○ manage stress.
 - stop smoking and vaping,

This can seem overwhelming, so work on this over time. Set small goals for yourself, such as eating more fruits and vegetables. As you meet them, expand or make new ones.

- Ask others for help—family, friends, and people in the community who can support and help you solve problems.

How you can help your community have good health equity

- Vote—think about the lawmakers and what policies are needed.
- Advocate—speak out to those who need to hear about how to make things better.
- Volunteer—help others as you are able.

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Additional Resources

American Thoracic Society

- <https://www.thoracic.org/patients>
- <https://www.thoracic.org/patients/par/par-publications/patient-voices9/index.php>
- <https://www.thoracic.org/about/health-equality/documents-and-resources-on-health-equality.php>

References

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3. Peterson A. Education, Training and Research (ETR). The ETR Blog. Educational Equity is Health Equity. April 25, 2019. <https://www.etr.org/about-us/health-equity-framework/>
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