HEALTH PROMOTION APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES

Traditional approaches to health promotion have tended to focus on specific diseases, illnesses and injury prevention and have centred on medical intervention to cure or prevent ill health. Contemporary approaches to health promotion now acknowledge the significant role played by underlying social, environmental and economic determinants such as employment, income, level of education, geographic location and cultural beliefs in the level of health achieved by individuals or population groups. Research has shown that effective health promotion requires a range of approaches and strategies to address the many factors that determine the health of individuals and populations and to bring about long-term improvements. These approaches include:

• lifestyle and behavioural approaches
• preventative medical approaches
• public health approaches.

Furthermore it must involve the community at all levels, so that people feel engaged in decisions that aim to bring about change and empowered to improve their health.

Lifestyle and behavioural approaches

A lifestyle approach to health promotion is based on the premise that the major causes of morbidity and mortality within Australia are diseases resulting from poor lifestyle behaviour choices. It assumes that the provision of relevant information and skills will enable people to adopt a healthy lifestyle and thereby improve their health. This approach is directed at improving risk factors related to individual behaviour, such as poor eating habits, physical inactivity, smoking, unsafe sexual activity and drug and alcohol abuse. A lifestyle approach to health promotion emphasises the role an individual plays in improving their own health status. Health promotion programs that use this approach target people at the individual or population level in an effort to change their behavioural choices. Health education programs, social marketing campaigns, the promotion of self-help or self-care practices and public policies are strategies that are commonly used under this approach to support healthy lifestyles.
Example of the behavioural approach to health promotion include:

- Web-based help services such as Reach Out! that seek to enhance young people's health knowledge and skills to support and improve their mental health and well-being.
- Physical activity initiatives targeting school-aged children that aim to increase levels of regular physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour.
- Quit smoking campaigns and strategies that encourage people to stop smoking or persuade them to remain smoke free.
- Road safety campaigns that challenge people's attitudes towards unsafe driving behaviours such as speeding.

**INQUIRY: Effectiveness of lifestyle approaches aimed at young people**

Research a recent campaign of the Commonwealth Government in relation to the issue of binge drinking among young people. An example is the ‘Don’t turn a night out into a nightmare’ campaign. Use the Drinking nightmare weblink in your eBookPLUS or a recent substitute. Read the ‘About the campaign’ section and answer the following questions.

1. Explain why the campaign is an example of a lifestyle approach to health promotion.
2. Identify the campaign's key target audience and outline reasons for this group being targeted.
3. Identify the campaign's objectives.
4. Critically evaluate the likely effectiveness of this campaign in achieving its objectives and
changing the drinking behaviour of young people.

5. Propose strategies and actions that could be taken to address the harmful drinking patterns of some young people and promote better health.

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### Preventative medical approaches

Preventative medical approaches are based on a more traditional approach to health promotion. These approaches centre around medical personnel such as doctors, community nurses and other health professionals working with individuals or populations. These practitioners work to identify physiological risk factors within these individuals or groups such as high blood pressure, abnormal cell growth or lack of immunisation. Medication or medical interventions are then used to eliminate or treat these risk factors. A preventative medical approach focuses on both disease prevention and the treatment of illness and their symptoms to limit their potential impact on a person’s health.

Health-promoting strategies used as part of a preventative medical approach can occur at the primary, secondary and tertiary stages.

- **Actions taken at a primary prevention stage aim to prevent an illness ever occurring.** Childhood immunisation programs that vaccinate children against diseases such as polio, whooping cough, hepatitis B and human papillomavirus (HPV) are one example of a primary prevention strategy.

- **Secondary level prevention programs try to reduce the likelihood that a disease will develop,** particularly in people identified as being in high-risk groups. In incidences where a disease is detected these strategies also aim to slow its spread. Examples of secondary prevention strategies include monitoring blood pressure and cholesterol levels of those at risk of heart disease, free mammograms for women aged over 50, regular Pap smears for women who are sexually active and the prescription of antibiotics for someone diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection.

- **Tertiary prevention strategies seek to prevent chronic ill health occurring through the use of effective rehabilitation that stops a disease recurring once it has been diagnosed and treated.** For example, an asthma management plan will be developed by a GP for a person diagnosed with asthma to assist them to manage the condition and a rehabilitation program will be devised for a person involved in a serious road accident to support their long-term recovery.

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### INQUIRY: Preventative medical approaches to cervical cancer

Research the Commonwealth Government’s ‘Immunise Australia’ program using the Immunise Australia weblink in your eBookPLUS. Click on ‘Diseases A-Z’ and locate the information on HPV. Read about the HPV vaccination program and answer the following questions.

1. Explain:
   (a) how the program works
   (b) why it is an example of a preventative medical approach to health promotion.

2. Vaccinations do not prevent all forms of cervical cancer, meaning that Pap smears are still needed. Argue whether immunising young women against HPV is an effective health promotion strategy. Give reasons to support your arguments.

3. Studies have found that less than 50 per cent of 20–24-year-old women had undergone a Pap smear. Propose ways to increase the number of young women who have regular Pap smears.

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### Public health approaches

Public health approaches are a more recent trend in health promotion. They have been significantly influenced by the policies and philosophies of the World Health Organization. These approaches take a more holistic approach to health and recognise the role played by factors outside the control of the individual and the immediate health system.

Public health approaches go beyond a medical approach of achieving health through the cure and eradication of illness, to trying to foster better health within a broader social and economic context. These strategies seek to address the broad underlying social and environmental determinants that contribute to poor health (such as access to affordable, nutritious food, housing, income, employment, social isolation, transport, geographic location and education) and create healthier environments that support people to make positive health choices. The approach therefore advocates for a broader range of people from various health and welfare related areas, such as social workers, urban planners and educators, to work with medical-based professionals in developing and implementing health-promoting initiatives to create healthier environments.

A public health approach to health promotion also encourages individuals and communities to be actively involved in determining their health priorities and developing and implementing health promotion strategies that meet these needs. In this way it seeks to empower individuals and population groups to enable them to exercise control over their health and work collaboratively with health professionals to improve their level of health.

Examples of health promotion programs that use a public health approach include those in health promoting schools and health promoting workplaces.

Health promoting schools

Schools that take a broad, coordinated, whole-of-school approach to the health and well-being of all members of their school community are considered to be health promoting schools. Based on a research-based framework, health promoting schools regard the health of their students and those in the school community as a high priority. They set out to positively influence the health of students by creating, promoting and supporting healthy practices and environments across the school setting. This involves implementing health-promoting strategies through three interrelated areas:

1. the curriculum
2. school organisation, ethos and environment
3. partnerships with families and the local community.
The national mental health initiative for secondary schools, MindMatters, is an example of a program developed using the Health Promoting Schools Framework.

The program provides schools with:

- a range of curriculum resources that are designed to enhance students' resilience and connectedness, improve their help-seeking skills and increase their understanding of mental health. These resources can be used in a variety of key learning areas to support teaching for and about mental health across the curriculum.
- material to review school practices in relation to issues affecting mental health and support changes to policies, structures, practices and curriculum to promote and protect mental health
- information on ways to identify, consult and involve parents, external agencies and other relevant community members in the promotion of mental health.

**INQUIRY: Eat it, Work it, Move it**

A school in Sydney's south-west has used the Health Promoting Schools framework to implement a program to address health concerns linked to rising levels of obesity and reduced levels of physical activity among staff and students. The Elizabeth Macarthur High School and the Macarthur Division of General Practice worked in partnership to develop the Eat it, Work it, Move it (EWM) program. The program achieved positive results among teachers and students in its first 12 months and gained support from the Western Suburbs League Club, the Wests Tigers and the NRL. This enabled the program to be extended into several other high schools in the Macarthur region.

Use the **Eat it, Work it, Move it** weblinks in your eBookPLUS to read more about how the program works, then answer the following questions.
1. Draw your own diagram of the Health Promoting Schools framework (figure 3.9) and place the headings ‘Curriculum’, ‘Ethos’ and ‘Environment’ in the circles.

2. Identify parts of the EWM program that fit within the framework and include these in your diagram under the appropriate heading.

3. Explain why the EWM initiative is an example of a public health approach to health promotion.

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**Health promoting workplaces**

Workplace health promotion strategies are defined as joint efforts undertaken by employers, employees and the wider community to improve the health and well-being of workers. A health promoting workplace recognises that a healthy workforce can benefit both employers and employees by improving morale, reducing stress, decreasing staff turnover, reducing absenteeism and increasing productivity. Improvements in the health of workers may be achieved by making changes to the workplace and general working environment, encouraging workers to participate in activities that aim to enhance their health and well-being, and supporting personal development. The impact that non-work related factors in the general environment, such as family welfare, home and commuting conditions, may have on the health of workers is also recognised. Strategies such as flexible working conditions may be implemented in health promoting workplaces to reduce the effect of these factors on the overall well-being of employees.

The programs developed by health promoting workplaces are related to more than occupational health and safety measures. A variety of initiatives may be established for workers and management to voluntarily participate in to promote better health and well-being. These could include strategies such as fitness and physical activity programs, provision of workplace counselling, free vaccinations for hepatitis B or influenza, workplace massage sessions, health information seminars, establishment of healthy canteens in workplaces and on-site provision of weight loss or quit smoking programs. Decisions relating to the type of programs that are developed and how they are implemented should be negotiated between employees, management and unions, with the involvement of health professionals being sought when required.

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**CASE STUDY**

**The Body Shop — balancing life needs with work**

The Body Shop is a well-known skin and body care retailer that aims to help staff uphold the company’s core values while successfully balancing work and life. Following is The Body Shop Australia’s work/life balance plan.

The balance between work and life is a challenge for most, but at the Body Shop we'll actively encourage you to balance your life needs.

Our aim is for staff to add value at work, at home and in the community. To enable this we provide:

- career development opportunities
- flexible working options: part-time casual, 48/52, term only work, job share
- LOVE (learning is of value to everyone) to foster a love of learning and to give staff the opportunity to learn a new, non-work-related skill. Staff are eligible for up to $200 during each two year cycle
- five weeks annual leave for retail management teams to cover seven day trade responsibilities
- community projects in paid work time to enable you to put back into the community
- on-site childcare at our Head Office
- a national childcare advisory service for all staff
It's up to the employee to make the balance work and we'll help wherever possible and in ways we may not have thought of yet.


INQUIRY: The Body Shop — a health promoting workplace

Read the case study on The Body Shop. Explain why The Body Shop is a health promoting workplace.

APPLICATION: Strategies to improve young people's health

Imagine that you and your classmates have been invited to attend a National Summit on Young People’s Health. The purpose is to develop a range of strategies to improve the health of young Australians.

1. Prepare for the summit as follows.
   (a) Identify the key health issues that young people currently face.
   (b) Identify health-promoting strategies that have been or are currently being implemented to address these issues. Determine which of these strategies should continue because of their effectiveness.
   (c) Propose other actions that could be implemented to bring about improvements in young people’s health.
   (d) Identify people or groups that would be involved in implementing or supporting these strategies and outline their roles.
   (e) Outline the intended outcomes of your proposed actions.

2. Conduct the summit as a class and participate in it as a delegate.

3. At the conclusion, evaluate the different strategies that were suggested by all delegates that attended.

4. Explain two actions that were suggested that you believe would result in significant improvements in young people’s health. Give reasons to justify your choice of these two actions.