

Health indicators

Health practitioners use physiological indicators (certain aspects of a person's health) to assess health and wellbeing. Some can be measured using pieces of equipment, but others are harder to assess.

GETTING STARTED

Work in pairs to list ways to tell whether someone is well or not and how each way can be assessed.

Health monitoring and illness prevention

Health monitoring means regularly checking that everything is as it should be. Monitoring in this way helps to detect any problems that may arise. These problems can then be dealt with quickly to give the best chance of sorting them out.

- A problem will continue to be monitored during its treatment.
- Support is given to help the person cope with all aspects of the problem.

An example of a problem detected in health monitoring is raised cholesterol. This could then be reduced through eating the correct diet. Lowering cholesterol could, in turn, reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke. Without health monitoring, these illnesses might have been undetected.

Illness prevention services aim to prevent people getting ill. Here are some examples.

- The National Healthy Schools Programme encourages children and young people to make informed health and life choices. It does this by providing knowledge, healthy school dinners, opportunities for exercise and an environment that increases emotional wellbeing.
- Health screening, such as dental and eye check-ups and breast screening, check that certain areas of our bodies are working as they should be or are in the condition they should be.
- Vaccinations help the body to fight infectious disease such as flu, tetanus, diphtheria and polio.

BEST PRACTICE

Every health and social care service provider should always be looking out for visual health indicators such as sweating and looking pale, as well as those that can be measured, as together they give a fuller picture of the health of the service user.

Measurements of health

Measurements of health include measurable indicators, observed indicators and lifestyle.

Measurable indicators

These are shown in the diagram below. Measurable indicators can be taken using purpose-built pieces of equipment – for example, a thermometer to measure body temperature.

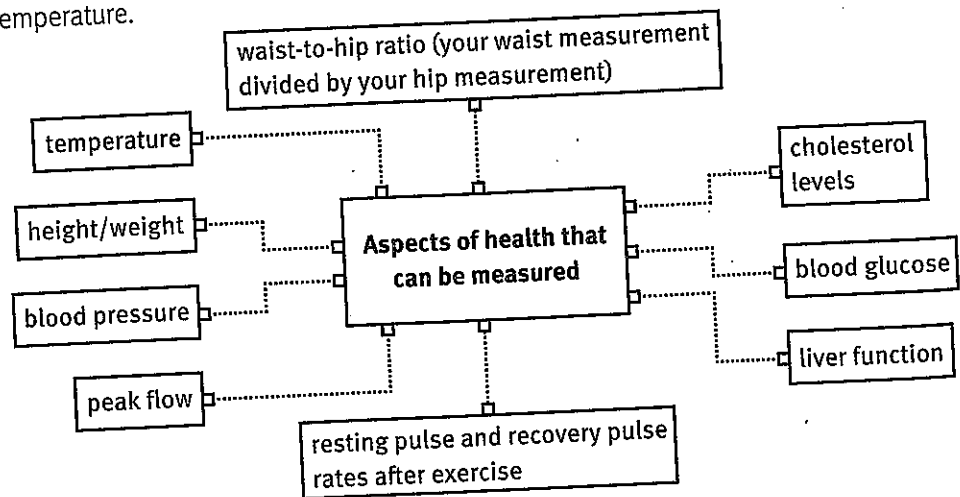


Figure 3.10: Examples of quantifiable health indicators

Positive and negative aspects of lifestyle

Table 3.6 shows the positive and negative aspects of lifestyle. They are less easily measured than the ones shown in the diagram but are useful indicators of health. One way of assessing aspects of lifestyle is to collect the information in a questionnaire or at an appointment with a health practitioner.

Table 3.6: Measuring the positive and negatives aspects of lifestyle

Some positive aspects of lifestyle	Some negative aspects of lifestyle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular exercise • Personal hygiene • Supportive relationships • Adequate financial resources • Stimulating work • Use of health monitoring and illness prevention services, e.g. screening and vaccination • Use of services such as dentist and optician • Risk management to prevent accidents • Education • Leisure activities • Balanced diet • Enough sleep 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genetic inheritance • Existing chronic conditions • Substance abuse (e.g. alcohol, nicotine, illegal drugs and misuse of prescription drugs) • Social isolation • Stress • Reluctance to seek help or access services • Poor housing • Environmental pollution • Poverty and/or unemployment • Unprotected sex

Observed indicators

A health practitioner will gain information by observing whether, for example, a person is pale or flushed, sweating, breathless, limping, behaving oddly, twitching, has a swelling, lump or rash and so on.

ACTIVITY

- 1 Draw a body outline in the middle of an A4 page, leaving enough space to add some labels.
- 2 Use a height measure, bathroom scales, a blood pressure monitor, a body fat measure, a peak flow meter, a thermometer and a pulse reader or stopwatch to measure your pulse rate, height, weight, peak flow, blood pressure and temperature.
- 3 Add these measures of health to the body outline, with an arrow pointing to the correct part of your body.
- 4 You will be adding to this in future lessons so it becomes your health profile.

CHECK MY LEARNING

- 1 Identify how different health professionals assess a person's health when someone has collapsed (a) in the street and (b) in hospital.
- 2 Explain how asking questions about an individual's lifestyle contributes to a GP assessment of their health and wellbeing.

LINK IT UP

To remind yourself about health care services and their roles (some include measuring health indicators covered here and in the next seven topics), go to Learning Outcome A in Component 2.