

What really makes us healthy?

What do you think of when you hear the term health care? If you are like most people you think of hospitals and clinics where doctors, nurses and other health care providers treat people who are sick. Health care is not just about treating the sick its about promoting and supporting those things that keep us well.

For many years there has been an 'individual lifestyle choices' approach to health promotion. We have all heard the messages about eating healthy and getting regular exercise, yet changes don't happen easily. It's time we took a closer look at how truly difficult it can be to do these seemingly simple things. For example, being able to make the choice to eat healthy depends on knowing what healthy eating is, the availability of healthy food where one lives, having enough money to purchase healthy foods, and the ability and time to prepare healthy meals.

When all these factors are taken into account the modest directive to 'eat healthy' becomes quite complex! What if I live in a community where fresh produce is not always available or affordable? What if I am a single parent working two jobs and I depend on processed convenience foods to feed my family?

Research tells us that people who have more money and education are generally much healthier than less educated people or those struggling with poverty. The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, play, and age; they affect the health of us all. They include things like income and social status, social support networks, education, employment/working conditions, physical environments, and child development.

We can dramatically improve the health of our population if we can affect the social and economic conditions in which we live. Interior Health has recently launched the Healthy Communities Initiative a partnership project between Interior Health and local governments that aims to improve the health of residents by addressing the social determinants of health.

Learn more information on this [exciting new program](#).

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