What Affects Your Health?

Guide to Reading

- **Building Vocabulary**
  Three of the four terms below refer to types of influences on your health. Write down examples of each type of influence.
  - heredity (p. 18)
  - environment (p. 19)
  - cultural background (p. 21)
  - evaluate (p. 22)

- **Focusing on the Main Ideas**
  In this lesson, you will be able to
  - explain why heredity is a health factor that you cannot control.
  - explain the role that environment plays in your total health.
  - identify internal and external influences that affect health choices.
  - access reliable information to evaluate an advertised product.

- **Reading Strategy**
  **Predicting** Read the main headings and look at the figures in this lesson. Then write down three pieces of information that you think might be covered in the lesson. After you have completed the lesson, look back to see whether your predictions were correct.

Quick Write

List three influences that might affect your health.

Your Heredity

Many factors affect your health and wellness. You have control over some of these factors but not all. For example, you cannot control the color of your skin or eyes. You cannot control the shape of your nose or your ears. Heredity (huh-RED-i-tee) controls these and other physical traits, or parts of your appearance. **Heredity** is the passing of traits from parents to their biological children.

Genes are the basic units of heredity. They are made from a chemical called DNA, and they set the pattern for all of your physical traits. You inherited, or received, exactly half your genes from your father. You inherited the other half from your mother.

- Children look like their parents because of inherited traits. Give two examples of inherited traits.
Genes do more than determine traits such as hair and eye color. Genes control how every cell in your body works. Genes can affect your health in ways that you cannot control. For example, some genes can cause disease. It helps to be aware that you might have inherited genes that could increase your risk of developing a certain disease. That way, you can make better decisions about your health. For example, if you have a family history of heart disease, you can choose to eat a low-fat diet and exercise regularly to keep your heart healthy.

**Reading Check** Identify What is heredity?

**Your Environment**

Think about where you live. Do you live in a city, a suburb, or a small town? Do you live in the country? Where you live is the physical part of your environment. **Environment** includes *all living and nonliving things around you*. Environment affects your personal health. **Figure 1.4** lists some of the parts of your environment.

**FIGURE 1.4**

**FACTORS OF YOUR ENVIRONMENT**

People live in many different environments, including big cities and small towns. What are two factors of your physical environment?

**Physical Environment**
- Where you live
- Housing
- Climate
- Air and water quality

**Social Environment**
- Family
- Neighbors
- Educational opportunities
- Job opportunities
Physical Environment

Your physical environment includes the home you live in, the school you go to, the air and water around you, and the climate. The climate is what the weather is like where you live. For example, some places have warm weather all year long. Other places have cold winters and warm summers.

Air and water quality are important parts of your physical environment. Breathing fresh air and drinking clean water are important for good health. Motor vehicles, factories, and power plants can all pollute the air. Air pollution can have negative effects on health. For example, polluted air can harm the health of teens with respiratory problems such as asthma. The quality of indoor air can be affected by whether family members smoke.

The water quality in cities is usually good because the drinking water is purified. Harmful pollutants are removed. Water in the country often comes from wells. Sometimes chemicals from farms pollute wells. Well water may need to be tested from time to time to ensure that the water is safe to drink.

Social Environment

Do you have brothers or sisters? Brothers, sisters, and other family members are all part of your social environment. Your social environment includes others in your life, such as friends, classmates, and neighbors. It also includes the services available to you, such as schools, health care, and recreation.

Does your community have places for recreation, such as parks and tennis or basketball courts? Recreation is as much a part of your social environment as schools and health care. Having places to play games and enjoy physical activities can have a positive effect on your overall health. Many communities have resources such as playgrounds and community centers where people can take part in different activities.

You may not be able to change your physical and social environments. However, you can recognize that there is a relationship between factors in these environments and your personal health. Understanding this relationship can help you develop strategies for improving and maintaining your personal health. For example, you probably can’t change the fact that you live in a warm and sunny climate. You can, however, wear sunscreen to help protect your skin from the sun’s harmful rays. You can’t easily change the people who are your classmates, but you can choose which of them will be your close friends.

Describe What makes up a person’s social environment?
Health Skills Activity

Accessing Information

Evaluating Information in Ads
To make good health decisions, you must decide what is valid and what is not. Here are tips to help you evaluate information in ads.

- **Check the source.** What or who is the source of the information in the ad? Is the source reliable? Many ads do not give any source. Other ads list unclear sources such as “most doctors” or “leading athletes.”

- **Consider claims the ads make.** Some ads make health claims about a product. How can you tell whether the claims are true? Look for facts that help prove whether the claims are true or misleading. Places to check the reliability of sources and claims in ads include your local library and Internet sites run by a government agency or university.

On Your Own
Choose a newspaper or magazine ad or TV commercial about a product that could affect your health. It could, for example, be about a food, drink, or cosmetic product. Find reliable sources of information and research the health benefits of the product. Present your findings to the class.

Your Health Choices

Your daily choices shape your health and wellness. These choices depend on many factors. Some factors are part of who you are. They include your likes, dislikes, feelings, and ways of thinking. Other factors are part of your physical and social environment. Your friends, family, trusted adults, and the media are some examples. Choices, unlike environment or heredity, are under your complete control. It’s important to take responsibility for your personal health behaviors and choices.

Influence of Family and Friends

Your family is one of the biggest influences on your life. It shapes your cultural background, or the beliefs, customs, and traditions of a specific group of people. Your family and its cultural background influence the holidays you celebrate, the foods you eat, and the activities you take part in. Your cultural background can also affect your health. Knowing how your lifestyle and family history relate to the cause or prevention of health problems can help you stay well.


\[\text{The celebration of Kwanzaa is a tradition in many African American families. What are some other holiday celebrations from different cultural backgrounds?}\]
Your friends can also influence your choices. This influence can be positive or negative. For example, a friend who listens to you and helps you find good solutions to problems is a positive influence. A friend who urges you to drink alcohol or try other risky behaviors is a negative influence. It is important to understand that peer pressure can influence healthful choices.

**Influence of the Media**

What do television, radio, movies, magazines, newspapers, books, billboards, and the Internet have in common? They all are forms of media.

The media are powerful sources of information. They can help you make wise health choices. However, you need to **evaluate**, or **determine the quality of**, everything you see, hear, or read. This is especially true of magazine ads and TV commercials. Their goal is to make you want to buy a product, whether or not it is good for your health. Knowing how to analyze health information, products, and services can help you make wise health choices.

**Reading Check**

**Identify** What are some influences on health choices?

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**Lesson 3 Review**

**After You Read**

*Review this lesson for new terms, major headings, and Reading Checks.*

**What I Learned**

1. **Vocabulary** Define **evaluate**.
2. **List** Name two types of media that could influence your decisions.
3. **Identify** Name two factors that are part of the physical environment.

**Thinking Critically**

4. **Apply** Watch a TV commercial for a health-related product. What information does the commercial tell you about the product? Do you think the information is valid? Explain.

5. **Synthesize** What can a teen who has a family history of heart disease do to reduce the risk of getting the disease?

**Applying Health Skills**

6. **Analyzing Influences** For a week, identify as many influences on your health choices as you can. Label each influence as being positive or negative. Explain why you chose the labels you did.