What is public health?

Transcript of a video by Health Education Wessex

Even before a child is born, a quest to ensure its long and healthy life begins. All over the world, public health programmes work to improve the health and well being of communities by identifying the risks that affect different people in different places, at different stages of life, and finding the best ways to minimise them. It's about giving everyone the best chance to live long, and healthy lives, from the very beginning to the very end.

A child dies every three seconds from infectious disease but public health interventions can prevent this by promoting things like breast feeding, immunisation and antibiotics. Where children die because they have no access to safe water or basic sanitation, public health programmes can make water safe and conditions sanitary.

Where research shows us who has the highest risk of developing certain conditions, public health applies it to the real world – it turns evidence into the advice and practical help we need to lead active, healthy lives away from danger – it helps us make the right choices and form the right habits that impact on our health now and long into the future.

Poor health doesn't just cost lives; it costs money too. By preventing, detecting and treating disease as effectively as we can, public health can help to halt the spiralling costs of treatment, saving lives and saving money.

Public Health is about understanding the huge impact that our financial, social and environmental circumstances have on our health, and reducing the differences between us to make us all healthier. It's about making health achievable, in mind and body, at home and at work, by supporting individuals, families and communities in the environments they live and work in. It's about working to ensure no one is left out or left behind as we strive for better.

Public health: preventing disease, prolonging life, promoting health, for everyone, at every stage of life.