

DEDICATED TO ACHIEVING HEALTH EQUITY FOR ALL COLORADANS

Your health is affected by many things other than just the health care you receive. Factors known as the “social determinants of health” can either positively or negatively impact the ability for all Coloradans to lead healthy, productive lives. The social determinants of health are important aspects that influence our overall health. These include where we live, the education we receive, the work we do, the wages we earn and the opportunity to make decisions that affect our own and our family’s health. Some of these social determinants are easier for Coloradans to change and improve than others.

The chart below (created by Annapolis Valley Health in Nova Scotia, Canada) lists some of the many the social determinants and poses important questions to consider when addressing how they can impact your health.

Income and social status	Lower class, middle class, or upper class? Studies show a strong relationship between better health and better social standing.
Social support networks	Support you have in your own family, your friends, in your community. Do you have someone to rely on?
Education and literacy	How far did you go in school? Are you still learning? How well do you read?
Employment/Working conditions	Do you have a job? Do you have a good job? Do you love it? Is it stressful? Dangerous? Do you have benefits? Are you subject to workplace bullying or violence?
Social environments	Is there a strong sense of community? Are there volunteer organizations that want to help? Do you trust your neighbours, your government? Do you feel your neighbourhood is safe? Is your own home a safe place to be, or is there violence?
Physical environments	How safe is the water you drink and the air you breathe? Do you live in a safe neighborhood? Must you drive everywhere, or can you walk to get basic services?
Personal health practices and coping skills	How able or knowledgeable are you to make the choices that can prevent you from getting disease, staying healthy, coping with life’s challenges? How able are you to make the choices to enhance and not damage your health?
Healthy child development	Early experiences on brain development, school readiness and health. Did you have a secure, safe childhood? Not having one can lead to problems later on.
Biology and genetic endowment	What genes were you born with? What health challenges or advantages do you have because of them? How can you make the best of what you’re born with?
Health services	How easy it is to find the right care provider for your needs? Do you have access to services that prevent you from getting sick - immunization, healthy eating programs, etc?
Gender	How does being a man or a woman affect your health? How does the demands that society puts on the different genders (and sexual orientation) impact your health?
Culture	Marginalization, stigmatization, loss or devaluation of language and culture, and lack of access to culturally appropriate health care and services impacts on your health. How does being on the outside of mainstream society impact your health?