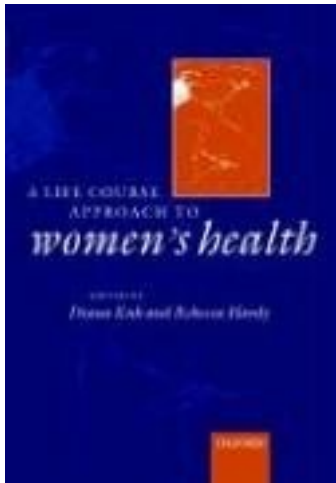


A Life Course Approach to Women's Health



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How far is the health of middle aged and older women shaped by biological, social, and psychological processes that begin in pre-natal development, childhood, adolescence, or early adult life? Do health risks gradually accumulate over the life course or do experiences as a child and young adult have interactive effects on health in midlife and beyond? Are women now reaching middle age in better health than previous generations? A group of international experts critically review the latest scientific evidence on biological and social factors at each stage of life that have long-term effects on reproductive outcomes, breast cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, musculoskeletal ageing, depression, body weight and body dissatisfaction. There is growing evidence that the sources of risk to physical and mental health occur across the course of life, not just in adult life, and in some instances reach right back to pre-natal development, or the previous generation. Contributors draw on their varied expertise in epidemiology, endocrinology, physiology, developmental psychology, sociology, and anthropology to identify the pathways that link early life experiences, reproductive events, adult lifestyle and lifetime socio-economic circumstances to later

health. A Life Course Approach looks for connections between development and ageing, and between the childhood and adult social environment. It is scientifically interesting, conceptually and methodologically challenging, inherently interdisciplinary, and policy relevant. This thoughtful book will appeal to all with a professional or personal interest in understanding the origins of women's health.

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目录:

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