

The European Health Report 2005



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A synthesis of evidence and analyses from WHO and other sources, the report identifies both noncommunicable diseases as the main cause of the burden of disease on the

European Region, and communicable diseases as an additional burden on eastern countries, caused by poverty and underfunded health services. It shows that using well-known, comprehensive interventions to tackle the seven leading risk factors - tobacco, alcohol, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, overweight, low fruit and vegetable intake, and physical inactivity - would largely prevent the seven leading conditions - ischaemic heart disease, unipolar depressive disorders, cerebrovascular disease, alcohol-use disorders, chronic pulmonary disease, lung cancer and road traffic injury. This creates a compelling argument for action. The European health report 2005 has a special focus on children's health, because health in childhood determines health throughout life and into the next generation. It reveals differences between the patterns of ill health in children and in adults, and wide differences in the causes and rates of illness and death in children across the Region. This shows the need for complementary policies on adults and children and the complexity of the task countries face in working to improve children's health. While recognizing that each country must chart its own course, the report identifies poverty and socioeconomic inequality as the greatest threats to children's health, calls for renewed effort in protection and promotion, and provides an evidence-based list of the characteristics of the most successful policies and programmes. Investing in children's health is investing in the future.

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目录:

[The European Health Report 2005_下载链接1](#)

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