European Public Health Week

Wednesday 19 May 2021

Your local community

Description: Local solutions are often impactful ways to tackle global public health problems. How can the main actors in your local community contribute to better health?

Sub-themes: Community health; community engagement; local solutions for a global problem (COVID-19 pandemic, overweight, mental health problems, effects of climate change); Air quality in cities; physical activity in urban environments; prevention of cancer through urban design; homelessness; community health workers.

KEY MESSAGES

1. **Voices of citizens demanding better health can make a big difference in supporting decision makers to make the right choices.**

2. **Healthier urban environments will be key to achieving the SDGs and a more equitable, sustainable and prosperous world.**

3. **Replacing car travel with walking and cycling can protect our health and the health of the environment.**

4. Housing as a concept should be revisited in the light of the pandemic: Was it adequate for those who had to shield of isolate for prolonged periods of time, providing access to movement outdoors, opportunity for working from home and balancing family life in restricted spaces?

5. Globally, air pollution is the second leading cause of death from noncommunicable diseases after tobacco smoking - mainly with cardiovascular and respiratory effects. Let's keep our air clean and people healthy!

6. Local governments can help design cities where we can walk and cycle to protect our health and the health of the environment.

7. The way we design our cities can have an impact on today's biggest health challenges including cancer - regular physical activity protects against breast and colon cancer.

8. Policies that improve road safety, prioritise walking and cycling and promote compact urban design can reduce car travel, carbon emissions, traffic congestions and health-care costs that result from physical inactivity.

9. Let's build healthy cities that are designed for people of all ages where they can play, work, live and love with health and well-being – including more green and blue spaces, safe and accessible recreational spaces.

10. Access to healthcare services in the community was restricted during the pandemic. This included access to mental health services.

11. Cities can sow the seeds for cancer prevention and control – let's act locally where green spaces for exercise and fresh air are the norm.

FACTS AND FIGURES

1. Cities are often national and international epicentres in the COVID-19 pandemic. Cities act as centres of community transmission, as well as entry points into further country-wide transmission through national and international travel and trade. (Source: Healthy Cities Network)

2. The majority of the world's population now live in urban areas, with the World Urbanization Prospects estimating that 68% of the world's population will live in cities by 2050. (Source: World Urbanization Prospects)

3. Cities are the closest level of government to the people. Municipal governments work most closely with people, including vulnerable groups. They are an additional entry point to reaching people and engaging them as part of the solution, with risk communication and public health messaging and advice, and with guidance from both the national authorities and WHO. (Source: Healthy Cities Network)

4. Community engagement for health is "a process of developing relationships that enable people of a community and organizations to work together to address health-related issues and promote well-being to achieve positive health impact and outcomes". (Source: WHP)

5. Community participation can aid sustainable development by taking holistic approaches to strategies that take into account local contexts. (Source: WHO IRIS)

6. Homelessness is a global issue. In 2015, Habitat for Humanity estimated that up to 1.6 billion people lacked adequate housing. People experiencing homelessness are particularly at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic. (source: The Homeless World Cup Foundation)

7. The importance of urban space reorganization has become evident for people's lives outdoors and for physical distancing. Cities need more green and blue spaces and a renewed system of healthy transport. (source: WHO)

8. Urban green spaces can help combat climate change by isolating carbon from the atmosphere and storing it. Urban green spaces can also help reduce the heat island effect. (Source: Nature)

9. Natural environments & green spaces play a role in human well-being, for example: mitigating impacts of climate change; providing places for active recreation & relaxation. A recent study found that communities experiencing COVID-19 have missed spending time in nature. (Source: WHO)

10. Inadequate housing arrangements could have a negative impact on the mental health and physical health of the most vulnerable, including women and children.

RESOURCES

- International Society of Urban Health: https://isuh.org/

- 17th International Conference on Urban Health: http://www.isuhconference.org/

- National Standards on Community Engagement (Scottish Government): https://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards

- NIHR Involve: Public involvement in health: https://www.invo.org.uk/

- Community action and community resilience in a time of crisis: a public health perspective (Professor Jane South, European Public Health Week 2020) https://medium.com/european-public-health-week-2020/community-action-and-community-resilience-in-a-time-of-crisis-a-public-health-perspective-ea182f59c213

- Global homelessness statistics: https://homelessworldcup.org/homelessness-statistics/

- UNESCO Global Education Coalition: https://globaleducationcoalition.unesco.org/

- UN Habitat's "Integrating health in urban and territorial planning": https://unhabitat.org/integrating-health-in-urban-and-territorial-planning-a-sourcebook-for-urban-leaders-health-and

- Health Care in Danger: https://healthcareindanger.org/covid-19-special/

- Public Health Scotland: Place Standard Tool - How good is your place? https://www.placestandard.scot/