

Focus question: How are priority issues for Australia’s health identified?

Big concept
Epidemiology helps measure current trends in mortality and morbidity in order to prioritise health expenditure to particular issues and to understand how health services and facilities are being used.

<p>Learn about: Measuring health status</p> <p>Epidemiology considers patterns of disease in terms of: Prevalence (number of cases of disease in a population at a specific time) Incidence (number of NEW cases of disease in a population) Distribution (the extent) Apparent causes (Determinants and indicators)</p> <p>The prevalence of the leading causes of death (CVD, CANCER, STROKE) have decreased since 1991, with most causes of death being half what they were a decade ago. Decreases due to improvements in technology, and a better awareness of diseases and treatment.</p>	<p>Learn about: Identifying priority health issues</p> <p>Social justice principles value the reduction or elimination of inequity, the promotion of inclusiveness of diversity, and the establishment of environments that are supportive of all people. Identifying population groups with significant health inequities is important to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the health disadvantages of groups in a population • Better understand the social determinants of health • Identify the prevalence of disease and injury in specific groups <p>Epidemiological data reveals the prevalence of condition and illness, and helps us to identify risk factors. The identification of risk factors indicates the potential for prevention and early intervention in a health area. The cost to the individual and community of disease is useful for health authorities whilst they prioritise health issues and determine health interventions.</p>
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<p>Big questions</p>	
<p>What doesn’t epidemiology tell us?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn’t always show the significant variations in the health status among population subgroups. • Quality of life is not always accurately indicated in terms of people’s level of distress, impairment, disability or handicap. • Statistics explain little about the degree and impact of illness. • Cannot provide the whole health, data on areas such as mental health is incomplete and non-existent. • Fails to explain WHY health inequities persist • Does not account for health determinants (social, economic, environmental, and cultural factors that shape an individual’s health) 	<p>Why is it important to prioritise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus public attention and health policy on those causes of illness and death that are creating the greatest burden of disease and having the greatest economic impact • Focus on the disadvantaged groups that contribute significantly to the burden of disease in Australia • Limited health budget so expenditure has to be prioritised in order to ensure best possible outcomes for the expenditure.
<p>Examples or new solutions</p>	

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