

# Family

## Definition of family:

The definition of a family varies by organization, discipline, and individual.

Family consists of two or more individuals who share a residence or live near one another ; possess some common emotional bond; engage in interrelated social positions, roles and tasks; and share cultural ties , a sense of affection and belonging.

The family is the primary unit of all societies. An individual usually spends his/her life in two families.

1. Family of origin (in which the individual is born into)
2. Families of procreation (the one set up after marriage).

## What is Family Health?

Family health refers to the health status of a given family at a given point in time. It includes all the *attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and habits* that families use to *obtain, sustain, or regain maximum health*

In fact, family health, like individual health, ranges along a continuum from wellness to illness. It involves not only the health of the members and how they relate to other members, but also how well they relate to and cope with the community outside the family. A family may be at one point on that continuum now and at a much different point 6 months from now.

## **ATTRIBUTES OF FAMILIES AS SOCIAL SYSTEMS**

- (1) The members within a family are interdependent; what one does affects the others and, ultimately, influences total family health.
- (2) Families maintain boundaries. That unite them and preserve their autonomy, while also differentiating them from others. These boundaries, which result from shared experiences and expectations, link family members together in a bond that excludes the rest of the world
- (3) Families exchange energy with their environments. families engage in an input–output energy exchange with external resources. This energy exchange promotes a healthy ecologic balance between the family system and the environment that is its immediate community.

For example, a child-bearing family needs adequate food, shelter, and emotional

support, as well as information on how to accomplish its developmental tasks.

The family also needs community resources, such as health care, education, and employment, all of which are forms of environmental input.

In return, the family contributes to the community by working and by consuming goods and services. If a family does not have adequate income or emotional support or does not use community resources, that family does not experience a proper energy exchange with its environment. An inadequate exchange can lead to dysfunction and poor health

(4) Families are adaptive. Families are adaptive, equilibrium-seeking systems.

In accordance with their nature, families never stay the same. They shift and change in response to internal and external forces.

Internally, the family composition changes as new members are added or members leave through death or divorce. Roles and relationships change as members advance in age and experience; normative expectations change as members resolve their tensions and differing points of view. Externally, families are affected from sources, such as school, work, peers, neighbors, religion, and government; consequently, they are forced to accommodate to new demands.

Adapting to these influences may require a family to change its behaviors, its goals, and even its values.

(5) Families are goal directed. They exist for the purpose of promoting their members' development. They exist for the purpose of promoting their members' development. To fulfill this purpose, a family must perform basic functions, such as providing love, security, identity, a sense of belonging; assisting with preparation for adult roles in society; and maintaining order and control. In addition to these functions, each family member engages in tasks to maintain the family as a viable unit.

### **Family structure**

Every family has a structure that can be categorized as either traditional or nontraditional(contemporary).

#### **Traditional family**

1. Nuclear family- husband , The most common traditional family structure is the nuclear family, consisting of husband, wife, and one or more children living together in the same house hold . In nuclear families, the workload distribution between the two adults can vary. Both adults may work outside the home; one

adult may work outside the home while the other stays at home and assumes primary responsibilities for the household; or partners may alternate, constantly renegotiating work and domestic responsibilities.

2. Multi generational families in which several generations or age groups live together in the same household
3. Augmented family, this is a family group in which extended family members or non relatives or both live with and provide significant care to the children
4. A nuclear –dyad (pair) family consist of a husband and wife living together who have no children or who have grown children living outside the home
5. Single –adult families in which one adult is living alone by choice or separation .separation may be the result of divorce, death, or distance from children

#### Examples of Non traditional family

1. Unmarried single parent family
2. Foster family
3. Homeless families

#### **Stages of the family life cycle**

Every family moves through stages in its life cycle. Families develop in two broad stages: one of expansion as new members are added and roles and relationships are increased, and one of contraction as family members leave to start lives of their own or age and die.

In some families expansion and contraction are repeated as various members are added, return home with their children and perhaps a partner, or leave home permanently

#### **Functions of the families**

Families in every culture throughout history have engaged in similar functions:

1. families have produced children,
2. physically maintained their members,
3. protected their health,
4. encouraged their education or training,
5. given emotional support and acceptance, and provided supportive care during illness.

6. socialize members by teaching basic values and attitudes that determined behaviour
7. provide members with sense of affiliation, a sense of belonging
8. To establish social controls to maintain order

*Community health nurses use this information to assess a family's functioning. This information enables the nurse to work with the family and assist in improving the quality of its functioning.*

### ***Family Promotion and Illness Prevention***

**Health promotion** has been defined by the World Health Organization's (WHO) 2005 as "the process of enabling people to increase control over their health and its determinants, and thereby improve their health".

*Teaching people how to prevent illness and how to remain healthy is basic to community health nursing.*

The nurse can provide information about immunizations, teach the importance of following an immunization schedule, and follow up with the client during home visits. Even within the limitations of chronic illnesses, family members can be taught health promotion activities to live as healthfully as possible. Health promotion activities may include screening for hypertension and elevated cholesterol, performing a physical assessment, and teaching about nutrition and safety.

Such activities can occur during a family health visit; while family members are at their place of work, school, or recreation; or at self-help group meetings. Community health nurses provide health promotion services to couples during prenatal classes by teaching about the expected changes during pregnancy and providing anticipatory guidance for safe infant care.