EMTIRO HEALTH
inspired support.

NAVIGATING YOUR HEALTH CARE SERIES

Neighborhood and Built Environment

Health and Health Care

Social and Community Context

Education

Economic Stability

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

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OTHER SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH MAY INCLUDE:

Economic Stability
Low Incomes
Job Availability
Access to Healthy Food
Housing Prices

Education
Level of School Achieved
Language Spoken at Home
Reading Ability
Early Childhood Education
   & Development

Social and Community Context
Living in a Close-knit
   Community
Participation in the
   Community
Discrimination
Involvement with Law
   Enforcement

Health and Health Care
Access to Health Care
Access to Primary Care
Health Literacy

Neighborhood and Built Environment
Access to Foods that
   Support Healthy Eating
Quality of Housing
Crime and Violence
Environmental Conditions
(air quality, clean water)

Many things determine how healthy we are, and they don't all have to do with how often we go to the doctor or if we take our medications.

While going to the doctor and following the directions for taking medicines are important for us to be healthy, things like where we live, the amount of money we make, how much we interact with our community, and the condition of our homes also affect how healthy we are. These are called Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) and they are very important because they can really pack a punch where our general health is concerned. For instance, it's important for doctors to discuss topics like transportation. Identifying that someone cannot get a ride to a clinic appointment is important to know so the doctor can help find a way to get the patient the care they need. Another example of an SDoH would be access to healthy foods; this can be an issue if someone doesn't live near a large grocery store that carries a lot of healthy options or if someone doesn't have the money to buy fresh foods which tend to be more expensive than processed choices.

The United States spends more money on healthcare than any other nation, but equal attention is not given to improve SDoH. SDoH are important because they affect things like how long we will live, if the babies we have are born healthy, if we get a chronic illness, and if we have to use the hospital Emergency Department (ED) for an illness or injury when we should be seeing a Primary Care doctor instead. As much as 60% of a person's health is affected by SDoH and so improving the conditions in which a person lives is as important as making sure that the right medicines are prescribed and that patients attend their medical appointments.

The United States is working on changing the way doctors and nurses care for patients, including changing how doctors get paid, and how patients pay doctors, that will address SDoH and improve the health of Americans across the county. A lot of research has been done to look at the effects of SDoH on health, it has found that positive results happen when doctors and nurses think about housing, nutrition, education, neighborhood construction, income support and care management as part of overall good health. It is important that doctors and nurses continue to think about patients' social situations, not only to collect the data about health, but to make sure that they are able to provide appropriate connections to social services agencies based on a patient's needs.

The medical team (including doctors and nurses) want to help patients get help from social services because SDoH are important to a person's overall health and are important for a doctor or nurse case manager to know about so they can take the best care of their patients. For example, if you are struggling to afford housing or healthy food talk with your doctor, they may know of organizations that can help you find what you need. Sometimes the reasons you might be feeling unwell is unrelated to your physiology and is directly related to your living situation. Your doctor knows there is more to you than just your body and managing your SDoH will help you to live a healthier life which is your doctor's goal, getting you to be the healthiest you can be.

Some resources that might be of assistance to you include:

Forsyth County
Department of Social Services
741 North Highland Avenue
Winston-Salem, NC 27101
Phone: 336 703 3800
Fax: 336 727 2850
http://www.co.forsyth.nc.us/DSS/

2-1-1
875 Walnut Street, Suite 150
Cary, NC 27511
919-834-5200
https://www.nc211.org

County Health Department (directory)
https://www.ncdhhs.gov/county-health-departments