

Living in the United States: Is it good for our health?

AIM

To increase awareness of the impact of social factors and lifestyle choices and their impact on the overall health of different communities.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, students will be able to:

- Analyze the factors that promote good health.
- Identify lifestyle choices in immigrant communities that impact health.
- Chart how living in America can impact the health of these communities.
- Explore print and electronic media for information on health.
- Conduct a survey inside and/or outside the classroom.
- Present findings in pairs and small groups.

TARGET GROUP

High-intermediate to advanced ESL students (level 6 to level 9)

(For the purpose of this lesson, the target levels range from 1 through 8, with the following guidelines:

1 = beginning, 5 = intermediate, 8 = advanced.)

Lessons can also be adapted for 8th- through 12th-grade students on health and health education programs.

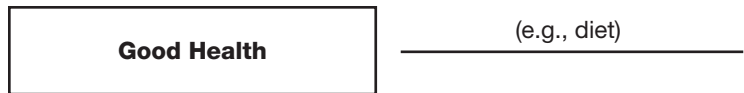
OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will explore the social conditions and lifestyle choices that impact health in the United States. They will analyze the impact of these conditions and choices on the well-being of immigrants. The lesson will also focus on the behaviors and attitudes that can be learned from immigrant communities to promote health in the general U.S. population. Through analysis of various sources, students will gain a broader perspective on the role that socioeconomic forces play in the health of the U.S. population.

DAY ONE

1. Warm-up Activity

Ask students to work individually to develop a concept or mind map. Have them write the phrase “Good Health” in the middle of their map, then ask them to complete the graphic organizer with their ideas on the topic of good health. When they have finished, have them share their responses with a partner or in small groups. Then elicit responses from students and list them on the board.



2. Discussion

Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to answer the following questions:

1. How long have you been living in the United States?
2. What lifestyle/dietary habits have you observed?
3. What habits have you adopted since living in the United States?
4. What contributes to overall good health and well-being?
5. How do social and economic conditions influence choices?

3. Conducting a Survey

Ask students to interview classmates regarding changes in their lives since coming to the United States. Have students complete the interview chart while conducting their surveys and report on their findings to classmates in small groups.

Living in the United States

Name	Lifestyle Changes	Dietary Changes	Socioeconomic Changes

Optional Assignment

Ask students to conduct the same survey in the community and prepare a short written or oral report on their findings.

LENGTH

Three 90-minute lessons

MATERIALS

- ***Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?***
www.unnaturalcauses.org
- “Immigrants Pack On Pounds in U.S.,” CBS News, December 14, 2004
www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/12/14/health/main661080.shtml
- “Latino Mothers: Poor in Wealth, Rich in Health,” by Yvette Cabrera, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, August 11, 2002
www-tc.pbs.org/unnaturalcauses/assets/resources/latino_paradox_journal_sentinel.pdf

DAY TWO

1. Video Viewing

Prepare the class for viewing the *Latino Paradox* segment from ***Unnatural Causes***, Episode 3, “**Becoming American**,” on immigrant health. www.unnaturalcauses.org/video_clips_detail.php?res_id=215

A) Viewing

Before students view the segment, have them do a free-write for 10 minutes on the habits and health of immigrant communities in the United States. Then ask them to share what they wrote with a partner or in small groups.

Ask students to take notes while they view the segment, keeping the following questions in mind.

1. How does the health of immigrants change after they move to the United States?
2. What is meant by the term *Latino paradox*?
3. What social conditions promote good health in immigrant communities?
4. What social conditions erode the health of immigrants?

After they view the segment, have students write a reaction to the content regarding the health of immigrant communities in the United States. Encourage them to share their responses with a partner or in small groups.

B) Analysis

For a deeper analysis of the documentary episode, ask students to discuss the following quotes, which focus on the socioeconomic factors that influence health, especially in immigrant communities.

“As these ‘new’ Americans become more like ‘old’ Americans, they get unhealthy. Immigrants bring to this country aspects of culture, of tradition, of tight family networks and community social networks that essentially form a shield around them and allow them to withstand the deleterious, the negative aspects of American culture.”

— Dr. Tony Iton, Director of the Alameda County Public Health Department

- What factors enable new immigrants to maintain good health in the United States?
- What are some examples of these positive elements in your own immigrant community?
- What factors in U.S. culture have a negative impact on health?
- What conditions erode the health of new immigrants?

“In America, wealth pretty much equals health. When you’re a new immigrant, the relationship between wealth and health is relatively loose. As you become more Americanized, that relationship becomes tighter and tighter and tighter.”

— Dr. Iton

- What is meant by “wealth pretty much equals health” in the United States?
- What are some examples of inequities in health?
- Why does the relationship between wealth and health become “tighter” for immigrants over time?
- How is the link between wealth and health manifested in different communities in your area?

Homework Assignment

Have students write a summary and reaction paper on the article “**Latino Mothers: Poor in Wealth, Rich in Health,**” by Yvette Cabrera, located at www-tc.pbs.org/unnaturalcauses/assets/resources/latino_paradox_journal_sentinel.pdf.

DAY THREE

1. Reading Activity

Ask students to read the article “Immigrants Pack On Pounds in U.S.,” about health changes in immigrant communities in the United States, located at www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/12/14/health/main661080.shtml

Before reading the article, students should work in pairs to complete the vocabulary chart.

Word	Meaning	Example of Usage
obesity		
sedentary		
acculturation		
leisure		
weight gain		
life span		
lifestyle		

After they read the article, ask students to answer the following comprehension questions.

- What does a new study reveal about the health of immigrants in the United States?
- What is the general health of immigrants when they arrive in the United States?
- When does weight gain and obesity first start to appear in immigrants?
- Why do immigrants experience weight gain after living in the United States?
- What healthy behaviors can be learned from new immigrants?

Ask students to share their personal reactions to the article with a partner or in small groups and then go on to discuss their personal observations and experiences in their own immigrant communities. Invite them to present their responses to the class.

Homework Assignment

Web Research

Have students explore different websites to obtain information on the nature of obesity, including its causes and effects. They can visit these health and medical sites to locate information and complete the chart.

- The Obesity Society promotes research, education and advocacy to better understand, prevent and treat obesity and improve the lives of those affected. www.obesity.org
- Obesity Action Coalition www.obesityaction.org/home/index.php
- Healthfinder.gov is the U.S. government gateway to reliable health information resources that have been selected by the U.S. Department of Health.

Weight and Health

Definition of Obesity	Causes of Obesity	Effects of Obesity

Invite students to report their findings and reactions in class the next day.

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