



World Health Day: Honoring global health



World Health Day is celebrated annually on April 7 to call attention to pressing global health concerns. This year’s theme, “Global Action for Universal Health,” promotes the need for accessible, affordable and quality health care for everyone, everywhere.

Why do global nations celebrate World Health Day?

World Health Day has been drawing attention to global public health concerns since 1950. It officially marks the anniversary of the founding of the World Health Organization (WHO) on April 7, 1948.

The United Nations (UN) established WHO as one of its earliest initiatives. When World War II ended in 1945, representatives from 50 countries – including China, France, the former Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States – officially joined forces to form the UN in an effort to keep peace, help people in need, protect human rights and support international law. Today, with nearly 200 member states, the UN continues to foster peace and prosperity throughout the world.

Early on, as part of its mission, the UN created WHO to promote public health and wellbeing. By design, WHO brings together policymakers and scientists to direct and coordinate international health efforts. Policymakers set global priorities and shape policies. And scientists share research, evidence and expertise to guide decisions and respond to ongoing challenges and health emergencies.



April 7

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World Health Day

Achieving universal health

WHO's efforts work toward a range of goals – including sharing knowledge to promote health and treat illnesses, creating international regulations and guidelines, conducting health research, strengthening health systems, and monitoring and addressing endemics and pandemics.

Though WHO has faced setbacks and criticism since its inception, the organization has succeeded in many areas, spanning treatment innovations, public awareness, education and global cooperation. For example, thanks to its efforts, people around the world now have access to vaccines and treatments for conditions like polio, smallpox, HIV/AIDS, Ebola, COVID-19 and certain cancers. There's also a greater understanding of how to nurture personal health and wellness.

Because of the UN and WHO, more people than ever before have access to health care, resources and support to live longer, healthier lives. And discoveries continue to happen every day.

As part of this ongoing mission, World Health Day highlights critical global health concerns. Past themes covered everything from coping with disasters to nurturing mental health, preventing violence, improving food safety, promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights, supporting heart health and more.

Practicing healthy behaviors

This year's "Global Action for Universal Health" theme serves as a call to action for putting policies, programs and resources in place around the world to help ensure people can get the help they need. It also encourages people everywhere to adopt healthy behaviors. While everyone's specific health needs and experiences are unique, some universal healthy behaviors exist – and can endure. These include:

- Self-care practices, like getting enough sleep, choosing nutritious foods, staying active, building positive social connections and taking time to relax
- Making informed decisions, setting realistic goals and preparing as much as possible for the unexpected to cope with challenges and set yourself up for success
- Protecting yourself and others by attending recommended routine health care needs, such as annual check-ups, immunizations, tests and screenings
- Getting involved – many health care organizations and community resource centers depend on volunteers and donations for support
- Educating yourself and others about health and wellbeing, relying on fact-based resources to learn about public health concerns, conditions and resources

These are just a few ways you can support "Global Action for Universal Health." Find more self-care resources in this month's toolkit for managing stress, anxiety and panic. For even more health and wellbeing resources, tools and tips, visit [optumwellbeing.com](https://www.optumwellbeing.com).

#WorldHealthDay

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