10 Health check

Focus on reading *Sentence completion; summary completion*

SKILLS PRACTICE

1 **You are going to read a text about disease. Before you look at the text, list any English words or phrases which you might expect to meet when you are reading about this topic.**

2 **Skim the text quickly without stopping at unknown words. Try to form a general understanding.**

Preventing Disease

Until the 19th century there was little understanding of how diseases spread, but as our understanding increases, the more able we are to prevent it from happening. There are various methods of preventing disease. These range from very simple precautions taken by individuals in the home – washing the hands for example – to expensive international campaigns.

The importance of diet in maintaining health is increasingly recognised. Throughout history, for example, sailors on long voyages suffered from scurvy, a disease which causes bleeding gums and stiff limbs. In the mid-eighteenth century it was found that eating citrus fruits (oranges, limes, lemons, etc.) could cure these symptoms and ships began to carry supplies of limes. In the twentieth century it was discovered that citrus fruits are particularly rich in ascorbic acid, commonly known as vitamin C, and that it is the lack of this substance that causes scurvy.

The role of international organisations is also crucial in controlling disease. One example of this is smallpox. In 1980 the World Health Organisation declared that smallpox, an often fatal disease, was officially extinct. This was the result of a successful, worldwide vaccination programme. It was hoped that the same success would be achieved with malaria, a disease transmitted by the mosquito, but unexpected difficulties have prevented the success of this particular programme.

An older method of preventing disease from spreading between countries is quarantine, which comes from the Italian word *quarantine*, meaning forty days. The system dates from fifteenth-century Venice and refers to a period during which animals (and formerly humans) are kept in isolation[1], before being allowed to enter another country. This allows time for the symptoms of any disease to develop before it can be unknowingly transmitted. The UK has been successful in preventing rabies from entering its territory in this way. This serious illness is spread by animals, often wild animals such as foxes and rodents, but potentially also by domestic animals. Strict quarantine arrangements for all animals entering the UK have prevented the disease from becoming established there.

At a national level, risks to public health can be reduced by providing certain basic facilities. For example, adequate housing plays an important part, as overcrowded living conditions lead to the rapid spread of disease. Archaeologists examining primitive settlements have found millions of disease-carrying parasites and worms, which were passed easily from one person to another. Fresh water supplies and sewage systems are also necessary to prevent disease. Two thousand years ago the Romans realised the importance of these and the ancient ruins of Pompeii in Italy include fountains and toilet areas as well as drains. However, once installed it is essential that water and sewage systems are properly maintained. In London, for example, an outbreak of cholera in 1854 was traced to a faulty sewer pipe which was leaking into the supply of public drinking water. More recently, industrialisation has brought new problems of pollution and waste disposal, especially in the chemical and nuclear industries, and

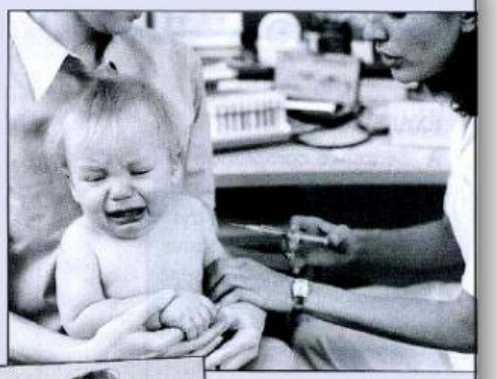
LIVEWORKSHEETS

strict safety regulations are required to safeguard public health.

Much protection from disease is given to children through vaccinating them. Vaccines, which usually consist of bacteria or viruses that have been killed or weakened, are administered in the first year of a child's life. They can no longer cause disease, but they cause a defensive reaction in the body. Later, if the child is exposed to the same organisms, its body will be able to defend itself against them. One very successful vaccination programme was that which was developed against poliomyelitis[2]: just two drops of vaccine on the tongue can provide protection against that disease for up to ten years. In addition to childhood programmes, vaccination is available to international travellers, to prevent or reduce the risk of a wide range of illnesses.

Another measure which can help reduce the spread of disease is health education. Although a lot of this is done by doctors, nurses and health visitors, many other sources contain health information. Magazines, newspapers, television and the Internet carry increasing amounts of information and national campaigns to increase public awareness have been particularly successful. In Australia, for example, there is a high incidence of malignant melanoma, a skin cancer common in those exposed to strong sunlight. A media campaign has helped to save lives by providing information on early detection and on precautions that prevent melanoma from developing in the first place. In the USA the fictional cinema hero, *Superman*, has been used in a television campaign to encourage people to check their blood cholesterol level. A high level of cholesterol in the body may increase the risk of heart disease and eating less of certain types of fat can reduce it.

Finally, regular health checks can be given to detect various diseases, resulting in early treatment. For example, blood pressure can be measured to make sure that it is not dangerously high and blood tests can reveal the presence of many conditions, from anaemia to the presence of viruses. Although regular health checks cost a lot, they can save money in the long term by preventing diseases from developing, and thereby save the expense of treatments.



Clockwise from above: modern vaccination; everyday hygiene; London in the 1880s.

1 Alone, without contact with other animals
2 An infectious disease, which sometimes causes paralysis. Often referred to as 'polio'.

TIP Even if the maximum number of words is three, most of the answers may be just one or two words in length.

One of the tasks you might meet in the IELTS Reading module is completing sentences. After reading the whole text quickly, you will have to use a scanning strategy to find the exact parts that you want to look at more carefully.

The maximum number of words you can use is given in the instructions; it is usually three, but can sometimes be one or two.

In this task type, the words you have to use to complete the sentences must be taken from the text, exactly as they appear there.

3 **Use up to three words from the last paragraph of the text to complete this sentence.**

- The disadvantage of health checks is that initially they .....

The correct answer is *cost a lot*. Although the word *expense* is mentioned in the same paragraph, *expensive* does not appear. So even though it means the same thing, *are expensive* would be incorrect.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

EXAM PRACTICE

▶ Sentence completion

TIP In this task type, the sentences follow the same order as the references in the text.

HELP
In the IELTS test you are only told the maximum number of words to use. To make the task easier now, the number of words you need to use is indicated by the number of spaces.

4 **Do the exam task below.**

Questions 1–5
Complete the sentences below with words taken from the reading passage.
*Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** for each answer.*

1 A dietary deficiency caused scurvy in ..... .
2 Thanks to an international vaccination programme, ... was eliminated.
3 The ..... system for controlling disease was first used in Italy.
4 A damaged .... caused a cholera epidemic in London.
5 In Australia a .... has been effective in reducing skin cancer.

▶ Summary completion

Another task is completing a summary of the reading text by choosing from a list of words. The words are usually (but not always) nouns.

It is best to read the whole summary quickly, before attempting the questions. Then you have to follow steps similar to the ones above, for completing sentences.

5 **Do the exam task below, based on the same text.**

HELP
In the IELTS test there are usually several extra words which do not fit anywhere. To make this task easier now, there is only one extra word.

TIP In summary completion tasks you only use each word once. When you have used one of the words, cross it out.

Questions 6–10
Complete the summary below using words from the box.

There are various ways of preventing or reducing disease. Firstly, a good **6** ..... can help prevent diseases like scurvy. Secondly, suitable **7** ..... , with clean water and well-maintained sewage pipes, can be effective in stopping any diseases from spreading. Thirdly, children can be given a **8** ..... to help them fight diseases such as polio. In addition, the mass media can be used to run health **9** ..... programmes. In Australia, malignant melanoma was reduced in this way. Lastly, diseases can be treated in the early stages if people are given regular **10** ..... . These can be expensive, but they save money later.

education	*diet*	*vaccination*	*housing*
quarantine	*checks*		

LIVEWORKSHEETS