

Healthy life expectancy is shorter in the UK than abroad

People in the UK enjoy fewer years of good health before they die than the citizens of most comparable European countries as well as Australia and Canada, a major report shows. The health secretary, Jeremy Hunt, said Britain's performance was "shocking" compared with that of other countries, and called for action to turn it around by local health commissioners, who are about to take up their new responsibilities.

The UK ranked 12th out of 19 countries of similar affluence in 2010 in terms of healthy life expectancy at birth, according to a detailed analysis from the Global Burden of Disease data collected by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) in Seattle. While life expectancy has improved by 4.2 years in the UK over the two decades, other countries have improved faster. In 2010, Spain topped the league. Its people could expect 70.9 years of healthy life – before disease and disability began to take a toll. Second came Italy, with 70.2 years and third was Australia, on 70.1 years. In the UK, we can expect 68.6 healthy years of life.

Hunt said the UK was a long way behind its global counterparts and called for action by local health commissioners to tackle the five big killers – cancer, heart disease, stroke, respiratory and liver diseases. He will on Tuesday announce a strategy to tackle cardiovascular disease, which he says could save 30,000 lives a year. "Despite real progress in cutting deaths, we remain a poor relative to our global cousins on many measures of health, something I want to change," he said. But the problem is only in part to do with hospital care – much of it is about the way we live. Our diet, our drinking and continuing smoking habits all play a part, according to one of the report's authors, Prof John Newton, chief knowledge officer of Public Health England, which assumes its responsibilities on 1 April.

It must be worth looking to see how Italy and Greece (at 11th, just ahead of the UK) can do better than us in spite of their economic and political problems, he said. It was not difficult to get fresh fruit and olive oil in the UK. "It is more the propensity not to stuff yourself with all the wrong things, which we are rather good at," he said. Drinking and drug use have been the main issues behind the worsening of the UK's ranking in early deaths among adults aged 20-54. In 2010, drugs were the sixth leading cause of death in this age group and alcohol was 18th – up from 32nd and 43rd place respectively 20 years earlier. As people live longer, disability is becoming an ever-bigger issue. In 2010, mental and behavioural disorders (mainly depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol use, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder), and musculoskeletal disorders (mainly lower back pain and falls) were responsible for

A- Say if these sentences are true or false.

- Life expectancy has improved in the UK at the same rate as in other countries **True / False**
- Hospital care is to blame for the citizen's poor health. **True / False**
- People in the UK could get healthy food **True / False**

B- Answer the questions about the text in your own words.

- How does the way people live affect their health?

- Why does Hunt say Britain's performance was "shocking"?

C- Find words in the text that mean the same as

Surprising _____
Face _____
Incapacity _____
Important _____

D- Rewrite the sentences without changing the meaning

- We live longer, so our health will be worse.
The longer _____, the _____
- People's life can improve, but they have to change their eating habits.
If _____

