

**UNNATURAL CAUSES** is the acclaimed documentary series broadcast by PBS and now used by thousands of organizations around the country to tackle the root causes of our alarming socio-economic and racial inequities in health.

The four-hour series crisscrosses the nation uncovering startling new findings that suggest there is much more to our health than bad habits, health care, or unlucky genes. The social circumstances in which we are born, live, and work can actually get under our skin and disrupt our physiology as much as germs and viruses.

Among the clues:

- It's not CEOs dropping dead from heart attacks, but their subordinates.
- Poor smokers are at higher risk of disease than rich smokers.
- Recent Latino immigrants, though typically poorer, enjoy better health than the average American. But the longer they're here, the worse their health becomes.

Furthermore, research has revealed a gradient to health. At each step down the class pyramid, people tend to be sicker and die sooner. Poor Americans die on average almost six years sooner than the rich. No surprise. But even middle class Americans die two years sooner than the rich. And at each step on that pyramid, African Americans, on average, fare worse than their white counterparts. In many cases, so do other peoples of color.

But why? How can class and racism disrupt our physiology? Through what channels might inequities in housing, wealth, jobs, and education, along with a lack of power and control over one's life, translate into bad health? What is it about our poor neighborhoods, especially neglected neighborhoods of color, that is so deadly? How are the behavioral choices we make (such as diet and exercise) constrained by the choices we have?

Evidence suggests that more equitable social policies, secure living-wage jobs, affordable housing, racial justice, good schools, community empowerment, and family supports are health issues just as critical as diet, tobacco use, and exercise.

As a society, we have a choice: invest in the conditions for health now, or pay to repair our bodies later.

## **Episodes**

**In Sickness and In Wealth** (56 min.) How does the distribution of power, wealth and resources shape opportunities for health?

**When the Bough Breaks** (29 min.) Can racism become embedded in the body and affect birth outcomes?

**Becoming American** (29 min.) Latino immigrants arrive healthy, so why don't they stay that way?

**Bad Sugar** (29 min.) What are the connections between diabetes, oppression, and empowerment in two Native American communities?

**Place Matters** (29 min.) Why is your street address such a strong predictor of your health? (This episode is available as a stand-alone DVD with English, Lao, Hmong, Vietnamese, Mandarin and Cantonese audio, as well as English and Mandarin subtitles.)

**Collateral Damage** (29 min.) How do Marshall Islanders pay for globalization and U.S. military policy with their health?

**Not Just a Paycheck** (30 min.) Why do layoffs take such a huge toll in Michigan but cause hardly a ripple in Sweden?

The entire **Unnatural Causes** series is available on DVD in English, with Spanish audio as well as English and Spanish subtitle options. [http://www.unnaturalcauses.org/about\\_the\\_series.php](http://www.unnaturalcauses.org/about_the_series.php)