

National Center for Environmental Health/ Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (NCEH/ATSDR)

The National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) plans, directs, and coordinates a national program to maintain and improve the health of the American people by promoting a healthy environment and by preventing premature death and avoidable illness and disability caused by non-infectious, non-occupational environmental, and related factors.

Mission. The mission of NCEH is to plan, direct, and coordinate a national program to maintain and improve the health of the American people by promoting a healthy environment and by preventing premature death and avoidable illness and disability caused by non-infectious, non-occupational environmental and related factors.

NCEH Activities. As a national leader in environmental public health, NCEH fulfills its mission by:

- ▶ Safeguarding the health of populations that are particularly vulnerable to certain environmental hazards;
- ▶ Conducting research in the laboratory and in the field to investigate the effects of the environment on health;
- ▶ Tracking and evaluating environment-related health problems through surveillance systems;
- ▶ Helping domestic and international agencies and organizations prepare for and respond to natural, technologic, humanitarian, and terrorism-related environmental emergencies; and
- ▶ Training and technical assistance of officials of state and local health agencies in preventing and responding to environmental public health challenges.

NCEH programs and activities address a wide range of environmental public health topics which include:

- ▶ **Healthy community design:** Encourages mixed land use, provides good mass transit systems, builds good pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and offers access to green space and parks.
- ▶ **Healthy homes:** Provides for a coordinated, comprehensive, and holistic approach to preventing diseases and injuries that result from housing-related hazards and deficiencies; identifies health, safety, and quality-of-life issues in the home environment; and acts systematically to eliminate or mitigate problems.
- ▶ **Childhood lead poisoning:** Develops programs and policies to prevent lead poisoning and educates the public and health care providers about lead poisoning.
- ▶ **Air pollution and respiratory health:** Leads the fight against environmental-related respiratory illnesses, including asthma, and studies indoor and outdoor air pollution.
- ▶ **Asthma control:** Seeks to reduce the number of deaths, hospitalizations, emergency department visits, school or work days missed, and limitations on activity due to asthma.
- ▶ **Environmental health services** (e.g., food safety and water and sanitation issues): Strengthens the role of state, local, and national environmental health programs and professionals to better anticipate, identify, and respond to adverse environmental exposures and the consequences of these exposures to human health.
- ▶ **Climate change and public health:** Leads efforts to anticipate, prevent, and respond to the broad range of effects on the health of Americans and the nation's public health infrastructure.
- ▶ **Environmental public health tracking:** Provides information that can be used to plan, apply, and evaluate actions to prevent and control environmentally related diseases.
- ▶ **Biomonitoring:** Monitors direct measurement of people's exposure to toxic substances in the environment by measuring the substances or their metabolites in human specimens, such as blood or urine.

The environment is everything around us - the air we breathe, the water we drink and use, and the food we consume. It's also the chemicals, radiation, microbes, and physical forces with which we come into contact. Our interactions with the environment are complex and are not always healthy. We are working to prevent illness, disability, and death from interactions between people and the environment. We are especially committed to safeguarding the health of populations that are particularly vulnerable to certain environmental hazards - children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

- ▶ **Newborn screening:** Provides the only comprehensive source in the world for quality assurance and proficiency testing involving the testing of newborns for preventable diseases.
- ▶ **Chemical weapons elimination:** Ensures that the health and safety of workers and the general population are protected during the handling and destruction of the nation's chemical weapons.
- ▶ **International emergency and refugee health:** Coordinates CDC's response to complex humanitarian emergencies and provides technical assistance to other federal agencies, the United Nations, and other organizations in areas related to the health of refugee populations.

Mission. The mission of ATSDR is to prevent exposure and adverse human health effects and diminished quality of life associated with exposure to hazardous substances from waste sites, unplanned releases, and other sources of pollution present in the environment.

ATSDR Activities. ATSDR is directed by congressional mandate to perform the following specific functions concerning the effect on public health of hazardous substances in the environment:

- ▶ Public health assessments of waste sites
- ▶ Health consultations concerning specific hazardous substances
- ▶ Health surveillance and registries
- ▶ Response to emergency releases of hazardous substances
- ▶ Applied research in support of public health assessments
- ▶ Information development and dissemination
- ▶ Education and training concerning hazardous substances