Environmental Health Services

What is Environmental Public Health?

**Environmental Public Health** is the branch of public health that focuses on the interrelationships between people and their environment, promotes human health and well-being, and fosters healthy and safe communities. As a fundamental component of a comprehensive public health system, environmental health works to advance policies and programs to reduce chemical and other environmental exposures in air, water, soil and food to protect residents and provide communities with healthier environments.

Why is Environmental Health Important?

Maintaining a healthy environment is central to increasing quality of life and years of healthy life. Globally, nearly 25 percent of all deaths and the total disease burden can be attributed to environmental factors. Environmental factors are diverse and far reaching. They include:

- Exposure to hazardous substances in the air, water, soil, and food
- Natural and technological disasters
- Physical hazards
- Nutritional deficiencies
- The built environment

Poor environmental quality has its greatest impact on people whose health status is already at risk. Therefore, environmental health must address the societal and environmental factors that increase the likelihood of exposure and disease.

What Does Santa Barbara County Environmental Health Do?

The primary role of Environmental Public Health in Santa Barbara County is a regulatory one. The division permits and inspects over 2,000 food service establishments (restaurants, fast food places, markets and grocery stores to name a few), more than 600 public pools and spas as well as approximately 2,000 businesses that have hazardous materials onsite or generate hazardous wastes. The Division permits and inspects the construction of water wells and small water systems that serve everything from single homes to communities with up to 200 service connections. There are about 12,000 homes in the county that use onsite sewage treatment systems (septic systems) that are regulated by Environmental Health. Solid waste facilities including landfills, transfer stations, composting operations and the still in the works waste recovery system that the County is planning are all permitted and inspected by the division. The division oversees the clean-up and remediation of lands that have been contaminated from chemical releases such as leaking gasoline.
tanks and past industrial activities. Public ocean beaches are sampled weekly for bacterial contaminants and advisories are posted as needed.

All these activities are directed at minimizing the risk of exposure to the public to chemical or bacterial agents that can cause illness and disease thereby promoting healthy living conditions and improved quality of life.

Please visit some of our frequently viewed pages:
Food Facility – Retail
Drinking Water
Liquid Waste Program
Recreational Health
Solid Waste
Cottage Food Operation

Magnesium Deficiency

Magnesium (Mg) is an important electrolyte which participates in many reactions and functions in the body. Magnesium’s roles in the body include; muscle contraction and relaxation, nerve function, bone development, and glucose metabolism. Magnesium participates in over 300 different and very important chemical reactions inside your body! It is found in many plant and animal sources. A table of food sources can be found here: [https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Magnesium-HealthProfessional/](https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Magnesium-HealthProfessional/) and include green leafy vegetables, nuts, legumes and whole grains.

It is difficult to assess Mg status because most of it is inside bone or cells. So what happens if we become deficient? Deficiencies can be caused by health conditions, alcoholism and use of some medications. Symptoms include weakness, numbness, muscle cramping, twitching, irregular heartbeat, and dizziness. True deficiencies due to low dietary intake is rare; however, inadequacies can occur when dietary intakes are low, absorption is reduced, and with GI disorders, Type II Diabetes, alcohol dependence, and older age. People who experience migraine headaches have been found to have lower magnesium levels. Chronic Magnesium inadequacy can cause changes to the bodies’ chemical pathways and may increase our risk for cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, and osteoporosis and migraine headaches.

To insure a good intake of magnesium from your diet eat a variety of whole foods - fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts and legumes and avoid processed foods as much as possible.

Epidemiology Program Updates

  ◊ Santa Barbara Hepatitis C report of 2015 data compiled by California Department of Public Health now available online