

National Center for Environmental Health and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

2024 Year-in-Review



Making better conversations between clinicians and patients about Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Nearly everyone in the U.S. has been exposed to PFAS. Many communities have been concerned about possible health effects from PFAS exposure and have been looking to healthcare providers for counseling and support. In January 2024, ATSDR released [PFAS Information for Clinicians](#). This document provides updated information for clinicians to consider when seeing patients who have concerns about [per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances \(PFAS\)](#) exposure or possible health effects.

ATSDR provides these and many similar documents for clinicians to address a common knowledge gap on environmental medicine topics. The information they contain can enable clinicians to better evaluate and counsel patients with concerns about environmental exposures.



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How Hot is too Hot for Health?



Heat sickens hundreds of thousands of people each summer in the United States. To help protect people from heat, the [National Environmental Health Tracking Program](#)

released the [HeatRisk Dashboard](#), a one-stop shop that allows people to enter their ZIP code and get a health-based heat forecast along with suggested protective actions to take based on their individual risk. CDC also developed clinical guidance to help the public and healthcare providers plan for and stay safe during excessive heat events. CDC's Heat and Health and Extreme Heat webpages have been viewed over 660,000 times. State and local jurisdictions are using the Dashboard to make local decisions. For example, the Pennsylvania Department of Health used the HeatRisk tool this summer to decide when to issue a heat health advisory to state and local agencies, hospitals, and health care providers.

The HeatRisk Dashboard is part of a broader suite of health promoting resources available through the [National Environmental Health Tracking Network](#), which is the nation's most comprehensive database of environmental health exposure information that enables jurisdictions to plan for and respond to environmental health threats.

Protecting People in Emergencies

NCEH and ATSDR were leaders on comprehensive response and recovery operations for a series of natural disasters affecting the United States and its territories, including Hurricanes Helene/Milton, California winter storms, Guam Super Typhoon Mawar, Hawai'i Wildfires, and New Mexico wildfires and flooding.

The agency plays a vital role in identifying health hazards during emergencies including for the recent Applesauce and Lead Outbreak Response. Due to the sentinel surveillance efforts of one of CDC's [Lead Poisoning Prevention Program](#) grantees in the North Carolina Health Department, they first detected rising levels of lead in children which subsequently led to the recall of apple cinnamon purees nationwide. Over 500 cases of childhood lead exposure were linked to consumption of apple cinnamon purees nationwide.



CDC's [Environmental Health laboratory](#) is uniquely equipped to respond to public health threats from chemical agents that can be used as weapons, being the only U.S. facility capable of measuring anthrax toxins and testing human samples for abrin, a highly toxic protein that can cause severe illness or death. The lab also provides critical support for botulism and ricin testing. The laboratory's unique and advanced capabilities in radiation detection and real-time chemical threat diagnostics are vital to national security and public health protection.

Environmental Hazard Superheroes

Scientists and public health assessors in the [Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry](#) have been working hard to protect people in communities across the country from environmental hazards that can harm their health. They have -

- Fulfilled 720+ requests to assist states, communities, and federal agencies in investigating hazardous substances, and addressing potential health risks of over 2 million people in the United States.
- Studied 40+ sites across the US to understand the potential human exposure to Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances and associated health effects.
- Educated 37,000+ health professionals on diagnosing and treating conditions related to hazardous exposures.

CDC's Vessel Sanitation Program (VSP) is back and stronger than ever!

The [Vessel Sanitation Program](#) (VSP) has restarted its operations and construction inspections. In August 2024, VSP organized a meeting that brought together industry leaders and health experts to shape the future of safety and sanitation for cruise ships. The gathering featured essential updates on food safety practices and innovative discussions on Legionella prevention, enhancing public health standards throughout the maritime industry.

VESSEL SANITATION PROGRAM

KEEPING YOU *healthy*
ON THE HIGH SEAS

Supporting communities to address cancer concerns



In August 2024, CDC's National Environmental Health Tracking Program launched the [Cancer Pattern Investigation Dashboard](#). This new dashboard, funded through Trevor's Law, is designed to support public health departments in assessing and responding to unusual patterns of cancer and environmental concerns.

The National Center for Environmental Health and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry also released updated [guidelines for examining unusual patterns of cancer and environmental concerns](#), which enable communities and health departments to work more effectively towards understanding and addressing community concerns around cancer



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