

Tracking Health in Your Community

Two years after launch, the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network expands its reach and resources to better help protect the nation's health.



Thinkstock

If protecting your family's health from the effects of the environment were as simple as doing a Google search would you try it? If your answer is "Yes!" the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (Tracking Network) is just what you need. Information on the Tracking Network can help you protect your health.

The Tracking Network pulls together environmental and health data into one national on-line system. With the tap of a few computer keys, you can find out about the water you drink and the air you breathe – how do they compare to the counties around you? What can you do to limit your exposure to things like smog? You can learn about asthma rates where you live and see if they are higher or lower than other parts of your state.

A doctor or a nurse can use the Tracking Network to see if lead or carbon monoxide poisonings are high in their community and educate their patients about what they can do to help prevent those problems in their family. A new home buyer could use the Tracking Network to research water quality in a certain area of town.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched the Tracking Network two years ago. Since then, the Tracking Network has added new data and a new generation data query system. Now, data queries take less time and data displays are more dynamic and easier to create. Users also can sort data in many different ways, add layers to maps, and compare maps side-by-side.

The Tracking Network recently added new [climate change](#) content including data on temperature, heat index, and heat vulnerabilities. These data can help local communities develop interventions and better understand the possible health effects and risks to specific groups of people. Another addition to the Tracking Network is [community design](#) data, which includes information on types of transportation to work, motor vehicle-related fatalities, and more. The design and maintenance of

communities may be related to chronic diseases, injury rates, and the effects of climate change.

During the past two years, public health officials used state tracking networks to identify growing asthma and lead-poisoning rates. They also found areas where drinking water was likely contaminated. As a result, steps were taken to protect and educate people about environmental hazards that could make them sick. Using the Tracking Network made decisions about public health actions both faster and easier.

Over the past two years the Tracking Network's reach has grown to include 23 [states](#). Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, South Carolina, and Vermont have joined the 16 states and New York City that were already tracking and reporting environment and health data. CDC aims for all 50 states to have tracking networks.

Plans include adding more data, such as information on biomonitoring, developmental disabilities, and cancer. In addition, the design and functionality of the online system will continue to improve.

Health Data on the Tracking Network

- Asthma
- Birth defects
- Cancer
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Childhood lead poisoning
- Heart attacks
- Pregnancy issues and birth outcomes

Environmental Data on the Tracking Network

- Air quality
- Climate change
- Community Design
- Community water
- Housing

Other Data on the Tracking Network:

- Population Characteristics

Visit CDC's Tracking Network at www.cdc.gov/ephtracking. For more information on other environmental public health issues, visit www.cdc.gov/nceh.

