

What is Environmental Health? Vocabulary

Absorption: The exposure route by which substances enter the body through the skin.

Acute conditions: Health conditions that have a sudden onset with symptoms are often short-lived. Examples include an asthma attack or the flu.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): A federal agency under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services charged with promoting health and preventing disease, including environmental health topics. The CDC established the nationwide environmental health tracking program that includes Maryland's network.

Chronic conditions: Health conditions that develop or worsen over months or years. The specific causes are often difficult to determine, and include some of the most common diseases in the U.S. such as asthma, diabetes and cancer.

Demographics: The traits of a given population with regard to age, race, ethnicity, gender, income and other measures.

Environmental health: The field that is concerned with factors in the natural and man-made physical environment that may affect human health.

Maryland Environmental Health Tracking Program: A state effort to build a network of environment and health data to facilitate knowledge and decision-making by the public, policy makers and public health officials.

Environmental hazards: Substances in the environment that have the ability to cause adverse health effects. These hazards could cause either short-term (acute) or long-term (chronic) effects.

Environmental Justice: The concept recognizing that all people are entitled equal protection from environmental and health hazards.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): The United State's federal agency charged with setting and enforcing standards to protect human health and the environment.

Epidemiology: The study of the sources and causes of disease in humans.

Exposure route: The way people come in contact with a substance can be described by the three exposure routes of ingestion, inhalation and absorption.

Ingestion: The exposure route by which solid and liquid substances enter the body through the digestive tract (for example in food or water).

Inhalation: The exposure route by which substances in the air enter the lungs through breathing.

Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE): The Maryland state agency created in 1987 to protect and preserve the state's natural resources. MDE works with national, state and local officials to comply with existing environmental laws.

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: The state agency in Maryland responsible for issues affecting the health of residents.

Socioeconomic status: Refers to a measure of an individual or group's economic and social characteristics including income, education and occupation.

Surveillance: The ongoing collection, analysis and interpretation of data and information to inform policies, track progress and serve as a warning system in case of emergencies.