

The Environment and Your Health

Many different aspects of the environment affect your health, including the air you breathe, the water you drink, and the climate you live in. It is important to consider how the environment may affect your health and to plan accordingly to avoid environmental hazards.



Air pollution is a danger because it is hard to avoid, and humans are in constant need of air. **Manufactured pollution** comes from automobiles, aerosol cans, industrial factories, and smoke from tobacco products. **Natural pollution** comes from fires, volcanic eruptions, and soil erosion. These pollutants affect the environment and cause problems, such as acid rain, climate effects, and damage to the ozone layer. **Air pollution** damages your lungs and can cause or worsen asthma. People that live in overly populated regions that are usually more heavily polluted must take precautions to protect their health from air pollutants. Secondhand smoke from tobacco products is also a danger to lungs and can cause cancer.

Water pollution can affect drinking water but can also affect products that have been contaminated by polluted water. Water can become contaminated with bacteria from a multitude of sources. These bacteria can get into food products when they are watered with the contaminated water. This is one of the reasons for the many recalls on produce in the last few years.



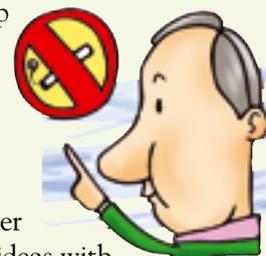
Activities

1. In groups, make a list of community initiatives that would help protect the environment and promote conservation of natural resources. Share your list with your classmates.



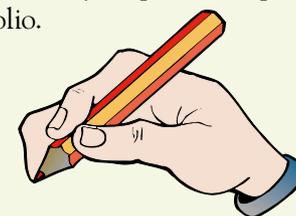
2. Make a poster that illustrates air and water pollution and the need to protect your health from these environmental hazards.

3. In groups, brainstorm ways of avoiding secondhand smoke, such as polite ways to excuse yourself, or ask people to stop smoking around you, etc. Also, think of ways you can persuade someone in your family that smokes to stop smoking because of the harmful effects it has on other people's health. Share your ideas with other groups.



4. In class, have your teacher conduct a survey to find out how concerned the students in your class are about the environment in terms of potential hazards. Use the following scale to gauge each student's level of concern: 1 - Not Very Concerned, 2 - Somewhat Concerned, 3 - Definitely Concerned, 4 - Very Concerned, 5 - Highly Concerned.

Home Connection With your family, find ways to help protect your family from environmental hazards. Include things you can do immediately, and things that might cost a little bit of money and perhaps take a little longer to implement. Write about your plans and place it in your health portfolio.



Following the Environmental Health Tips Below Can Protect You and the Environment:

Air

- Use public transportation as much as possible to decrease pollutants from cars.
- Walk, bike, or skate when traveling a short distance.
- Have cars checked for emission outputs to make sure they meet government standards.



Secondhand Smoke

- Make sure your house and car are smoke free by not allowing anyone to smoke in either place.
- Avoid establishments that are not smoke free.
- Ask people not to smoke around you.

Water

- Run cold water for 30 seconds before using to allow lead to leave pipes.
- Use a water filtration system to make sure your drinking water is of the best quality.
- Wash all produce with clean water before eating.



Discussion Questions

What aspects of your climate might affect your health?

How does secondhand smoke affect you?