

# Compendium of WHO and other UN guidance on health and environment

2024 update



## Annex 1



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## Annex 1: Messages on health and environment for the general public

This Annex provides tips and information on environmental health for the general public. It is adapted from the global guidance in this compendium for people having completed at least primary education. The information in this Annex is part of WHO's Your Life, Your Health: Tips and information for health and well-being, a WHO online resource for the public (<https://www.who.int/tools/your-life-your-health>). The resource provides tips and information for people's health and wellbeing at all ages. It also has advice on specific topics, such as environmental health. The information in the resource is easy to access, understand and act upon.

The audience of this compendium can use the messages below to promote health among the general public.

### Main messages

WHO tips and information for protecting nature, the environment and our climate  
WHO tips and information on breathing clean air  
WHO tips and information on accessing safe water and safe toilets  
WHO tips and information on washing hands  
WHO tips and information on ensuring the safe handling of chemicals  
WHO tips and information on keeping safe from ultraviolet rays  
WHO tips and information on protecting yourself from radon  
WHO tips and information on protecting yourself from health risks at work  
WHO tips and information on avoiding injuries

### WHO tips and information on protecting nature, the environment and our climate

People need a healthy environment in which to live. The planet we live on is under pressure. Too many resources are being taken from the planet. These actions and pollution lead to climate change. They also destroy nature. There are some actions you can take to protect nature and reduce pollution.

- Eat food grown locally such as vegetables, fruits, nuts and grains.
- Choose to cycle, walk and use public transport rather than drive a car or motorbike.
- Build houses that are good for your health, with insulation, ventilation and heating where needed.
- Use clean energy, and safe and energy saving devices, to cook and to light and to heat the home.
- Avoid using fossil fuels.
- Avoid the use of pesticides and herbicides.
- Avoid using plastics only once, such as plastic bags and food packaging.

### Resource links

- WHO webpage on climate change including fact sheets on climate change and health, and biodiversity and health: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/climate-change>
- The WHO Manifesto for a Healthy and Green Recovery from COVID-19 – six steps to take: <https://www.who.int/multi-media/details/six-prescriptions-to-who-manifesto-for-healthy-recovery>

## WHO tips and information on breathing clean air

Most people breathe air that is harmful to their health. Air becomes polluted in many ways. Pollution can come from cars and other vehicles. It can come from fires, factories, and by burning waste. Cooking on open fires and unsafe cook-stoves creates smoke. This smoke can make people sick as well. There are some actions you can take to reduce air pollution.

- Cycle, walk and use public transport rather than drive a car or a motorbike.
- Use cook-stoves that vent outside and that do not burn wood or coal.
- Build homes with insulation so they do not get too hot or too cold.
- Build homes with ventilation so that the air gets changed.
- Ensure waste is safely disposed, such as trash from the household or from agriculture.
- Avoid burning waste.

### Resource links

- WHO webpage on air pollution including fact sheets on ambient and household air pollution and health: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/air-pollution>

## WHO tips and information on accessing safe water and safe toilets

People who drink safe water and use safe toilets are less likely to fall ill. Such as with diarrhoea and other diseases. Safe water comes from a water tap, a borehole or other safe sources. Safe toilets are those where people are not in contact with excreta. There are some actions you can take to access safe water and safe toilets.

- Drink water from a safe source.
- Make your water safer for drinking if needed, by boiling or filtering water.
- Add chlorine to drinking water to kill germs and bacteria if needed.
- Know that solar disinfection uses the sun to make water safer for drinking if needed.
- Use safe toilets and keep them clean.
- Ensure children have access to safe drinking-water and toilets.
- Use a potty (small bowl) for small children and empty it into a safe toilet.
- Stop animals from leaving their droppings where people live or play.
- Remove any droppings immediately.

### Resource links

- WHO webpage on water, sanitation and hygiene including fact sheets on drinking water and sanitation: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/water-sanitation-and-hygiene-wash>

## WHO tips and information on washing hands

Washing hands with soap is an easy way to stay healthy. There are some actions you can take for handwashing.

- Wash hands with soap often as this is an easy way to stay healthy.
- Wash hands before eating and before preparing food.
- Wash hands after going to the toilet and after cleaning a child's bottom.
- Ensure that your children wash their hands with soap.
- For small children, help them to wash their hands with soap and water often.

### Resource links

- WHO webpage on water, sanitation and hygiene: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/water-sanitation-and-hygiene-wash>

## WHO tips and information on ensuring the safe handling of chemicals

People get in contact with many different chemicals every day. Examples are products used to clean, bleach, or disinfect, such as in the home or workplace. Many chemicals are harmless or even good for you. Others such as pesticides are dangerous and can harm your health. There are some actions you can take to handle chemicals safely.

- Store chemicals and medicines in a safe way.
- Store chemicals where children cannot reach them or open them.
- Add clear labels to packages of chemicals.
- Avoid storing chemicals in drinking bottles.
- Dispose of chemicals and medicines in a safe way.
- Avoid disposing chemicals and medicine on the ground, in rivers, or into sinks, drains or toilets.
- Avoid the use of pesticides for killing plant pests or pests in homes.
- Wear special clothes for protection if using pesticides.
- Know where to get help in case of an emergency, such as for a suspected chemical poisoning.
- Know the telephone number of the nearest poison centre.

### Resource links

- WHO webpage on chemical safety, including fact sheets and further information on chemicals of major public health concern: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/chemical-safety>

## WHO tips and information on keeping safe from ultraviolet rays

Different kinds of radiation can impact your health. Ultraviolet radiation is one type. It comes from the sun or sunbeds. Too much ultraviolet radiation harms the skin. It can also cause cancer. Too little is also not good. The body needs some ultraviolet radiation to keep in good health. There are some actions you can take to keep safe.

- Be aware of your time exposed to the sun, especially around the hours either side of the middle of the day.
- Know that some people need extra protection from the sun such as young children and fair-skinned people.
- Wear clothing with long sleeves.
- Apply sunscreen regularly when outside to protect your skin.
- Use hats with broad brims and sunglasses to protect your eyes.
- Avoid using sunbeds or other tanning devices.

### Resource links

- WHO webpage on UV-radiation: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/ultraviolet-radiation>

## WHO tips and information on protecting yourself from radon

Radon is a radioactive gas that comes out of the ground. It may be found in high concentrations in buildings, such as homes and workplaces. High concentrations of radon are mainly found on the lower floors of a building. For example, it can be found on the ground floor or below, but it can also be found on upper levels. Radon can be dangerous for your health and is one of the leading causes of lung cancer. There are actions you can take to protect yourself from radon.

- Measure the radon level in your home, which is easy and cheap by using radon detectors.
- Depending on the country, obtain a radon detector from a radon testing service.
- Or check with the local government for radon detectors.
- Alternatively check with the national agency in charge of radiation safety.
- Ask a radon expert or consultant how to prevent radon when building a new home.

### Resource links

- WHO webpage on radon including fact sheets on radon and ionizing radiation:  
<https://www.who.int/health-topics/radon>

## WHO tips and information on protecting yourself from health risks at work

People may spend many hours each day at work. There are many types of workplaces. A workplace can be an office, factory, restaurant or farm and many others. You can experience different risks in the workplace. Risks can be loud noise, ultraviolet rays, chemicals or germs. Other risks relate to movement. These risks can be to lift heavy items, sit for a long time or awkward postures like twisting or bending. There are some actions you can take to protect yourself at work.

- Follow the rules on safety at your workplace which are set by your employer.
- Use special clothing and equipment to protect from risks.
- Take training on safe work practices, how to prevent accidents and stress at work.
- Keep the workplace tidy, clean and comfortable.
- Report any situation at work you believe may be harmful to you or co-workers.
- Get to know where to find first aid and how to help co-workers in case of emergency.
- Keep a healthy balance between work and private life.
- Avoid always working long hours.
- Help and respect co-workers and to be positive in the workplace.
- Avoid sitting for a long time and adopt healthy eating habits at work.

### Resource links

- WHO webpage on occupational health including different fact sheets on workers' health:  
<https://www.who.int/health-topics/occupational-health>

## WHO tips and information on avoiding injuries

Many people get injured or die from drowning, falls and burns and other accidents. Most of these deaths and injuries can be prevented. Children and older people are at special risk. There are some actions you can take to prevent injuries.

- Make your home safe including for children.
- Put in smoke detectors and bars or locks on windows so a young child cannot open them.
- Put in guards or gates for stairs to prevent a child from climbing the stairs.
- Secure open waters such as pools, wells and ponds so children cannot access them.
- Teach all school-aged children how to swim.
- Support older people with ways to prevent falls and other accidents.
- Prevent fires in the home, such as to not smoke, use a cook-stove that is safe and use electrical appliances in a good condition.
- Keep safe by preventing injuries, such as cycle with a helmet, use seatbelts in cars and drink less alcohol.
- Learn first aid skills.

### Resource links

- WHO fact sheets:
  - o Burns:  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/burns>
  - o Drowning:  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drowning>
  - o Falls:  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/falls>
  - o Road traffic injuries:  
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/road-traffic-injuries>.



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