Acute public health events caused by a broad range of hazards, including biological, chemical and product-related hazards, continue to cause illness and deaths in communities around the world.

Global economic interdependence, unprecedented levels of travel and trade, conflicts and other transnational risks have increased the need for robust health systems.

In response to this, Member States of the WHO agreed to implement the International Health Regulations (2005), which came into force on 15 June 2007.

In 2014, 254 public health events were detected, verified and assessed.

Under the IHR, WHO is mandated to protect international public health security by ensuring that

- events are detected early,
- reactions are appropriate and based on well-founded risk assessments and international best practice,
- the international community is provided with timely and accurate information about the event,
- international assistance, when requested, is rapidly provided to control threats at their source, and to reduce human suffering alongside economic and social losses.
Detecting

WHO continuously monitors public health events of international concern. Potential public health risks are notified by Member States under the IHR and detected through collation of information from official and unofficial sources. Once a potential public health risk is detected, WHO collaborates with the affected country to verify the event.

Assessing

Following the identification of a potential public health risk, WHO offers assistance and carries out a joint risk assessment with the affected Member State to evaluate the likelihood of adverse public health consequences. This process is crucial as it determines the course of action to be undertaken in response to the health risk.

Informing

WHO shares details on acute public health events through the Event Information Site, a secure website accessed by the National IHR Focal Points and selected organizations; technical networks, such as the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network; and the Disease Outbreak News, a WHO webpage used for informing the general public.