

WHO calls for tighter standards on indoor radon

The World Health Organization (WHO) [has called on countries](#) to either establish or to strengthen existing programmes to control the presence of radon in homes and other residential settings. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that has been classified as a human carcinogen, and it can lead to an increased risk of lung cancer. A new publication, the [WHO handbook on indoor radon: A public health perspective](#), indicates that radon exposure is a major and growing public health threat in homes and recommends that countries adopt reference levels for the gas of 100 Bq/m³ (Becquerels per cubic metre). If this level cannot be implemented under the prevailing country-specific conditions, WHO recommends that the reference level should not exceed 300 Bq/m³.

Sunbeds pose a great risk of cancer

International cancer experts have moved sunbeds and other sources of ultraviolet (UV) radiation into the top cancer risk category. For years, scientists have described sunbeds and UV radiation as "probable carcinogens". The new analysis of about 20 studies concludes the risk of skin cancer jumps by 75% when people start using sunbeds before the age of 30. The new classification means sunbeds and other sources of UV radiation are recognized as definite causes of cancer, alongside tobacco and others. The research was published online in the medical journal *Lancet Oncology*, by experts at the [International Agency for Research on Cancer \(IARC\)](#) in Lyon.

In line with the recent IARC classification, WHO will review its public health recommendations to Member States to further control the use of sunbeds and sun lamps by young people. Every year more than 7 million people die of cancer. Forty per cent of cases could be prevented. This means 4 in every 10 UV-related cancer deaths are preventable through interventions targeted on risk factors.

Implementation of the road map: Libreville Declaration

The road map for the [Libreville Declaration](#) sets out the process and defines key milestones for implementing commitments on health and the environment in Africa. It represents the basis by which countries and their partners will report to ministers of health and ministers in charge of environment at their second meeting in 2010. As part of this process, Gabon and Kenya have already completed a country situation analysis and needs assessment (SANA), a pre-requisite for the preparation of national plans for joint action on health and environmental issues. Cameroon, Ghana, Mali and Mozambique have initiated this process. The Libreville Declaration on health and environment in Africa committed signatories to 11 priority actions; particularly, the establishment of a strategic alliance between health and environment sectors as the basis for plans of joint action.

GLAAS: UN-Water survey in progress

WHO is currently working to collect and integrate global and country level data on sanitation and drinking-water for the 2010 [Global Annual Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water \(GLAAS\)](#), working closely with regions, country offices, and several other UN organizations. The report and findings will be the basis for strategic discussions at a high-level policy meeting of ministers, hosted by UNICEF in the spring of 2010. GLAAS is a UN-Water initiative led by WHO. It complements the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme on Water Supply and Sanitation.

Eighth meeting of the Global Network of Collaborating Centres in Occupational Health

The purpose of the eighth meeting of the [Global Network of Collaborating Centres in Occupational Health](#) is to advance the [Global Plan of Action \(GPA\)](#) on workers' health and the 2009–2012 workplan of the Collaborating Centres. This triennial meeting includes joint discussions with the International Labour Organization and International Occupational Safety and Health Information Centre, followed by three workshops on healthy workplaces, health worker occupational health, and capacity building for occupational health services. The meeting will be held in Geneva, 18–23 October 2009.

September 2009, Issue 14

Worldwide, 13 million deaths could be prevented every year by making our environments healthier.

Questions and answers

How is WHO confronting the effects of sunbeds on health?

WHO welcomes the decision by [international cancer experts](#) to move sunbeds and other sources of UV radiation into the highest category of cancer hazards. In line with this recommendation, necessary action will be taken to ensure public health measures to prevent/ban the use of sunbeds for young people, to ensure that sunbeds are subject to health warnings, and to update recommendations to Member States.

What does WHO currently recommend?

While WHO does not recommend the use of UV tanning devices for cosmetic purposes, it is recognized that sunbeds continue to be available to the public. WHO encourages governments to formulate and enforce effective laws governing the use of sunbeds. Of highest regulatory priority should be the restriction of use by people under 18 years, as well as banning unsupervised parlours. Factsheet: [Sunbeds, tanning and UV exposure](#)

Upcoming events

28 September–9 October
[Bangkok climate change talks](#)

12–14 October—[Technical workshop on advancing integration of approached to adaptation planning, Bangkok](#)

18–23 October [Eighth Meeting of the Global Network of Collaborating Centres in Occupation Health](#)

Regular features

- Links to specific news and recent publications
- Links to our public health and environment regional offices

WCC-3: WHO plays leading role in forging global climate and health agenda

The 3rd World Climate Conference (WCC-3), an event held once a decade for nations to define the global agenda on climate and climate change, focused significant attention on promoting health in the global climate agenda. In line with the WHO workplan on climate change and health, WHO co-organized a forum discussion on [the needs and opportunities](#) for the global public health community to maximize the use of climate information and advisory services for health management. Recommendations focused on informing the Global Framework for Climate Services, led by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), to enhance the use of climate information in public health decision-making. WCC-3 was held in Geneva, 31 August–4 September 2009.

Technical meeting on climate risk management of infectious diseases

WHO co-organized a technical meeting to respond to the WCC-3 recommendations for improving health sector use of climate information, bringing together public health and meteorological researchers, practitioners and information providers. Focused on the experience of climate risk management of malaria in Africa, the meeting reviewed the state of knowledge and practice in use of climate information for infectious disease early warning, risk mapping, and disease control research and planning. Discussions outlined good practices and different experiences shown to strengthen collaboration between health and meteorological actors. The meeting report will highlight priority issues for investment and outline an agenda for next steps and further collaboration between WHO, WMO, the International Research Institute for Climate and Society, a collaborating centre for climate sensitive diseases, and other operational partners. The meeting was held in Geneva, 3 September 2009.

Protecting health workers – Preventing needlestick injuries

It is estimated that over 80% of all exposures from sharps and needlesticks are preventable. “Protecting health workers – Preventing needlestick injuries”, a training of trainers on the development of an occupational health surveillance network for exposure to bloodborne pathogens was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 16–18 August 2009. Over 120 participants from five countries attended. The meeting was the first WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region conference on preventing needlestick injuries.

Selected health topics from WHO's public health and environment web sites:

[Outdoor air pollution](#)

[Chemical safety](#)

[Ionizing radiation](#)

[Children's environmental health](#)

[Healthy settings](#)

[Global environmental change](#)

[Health impact assessment](#)

[Ultraviolet radiation](#)

[Water, sanitation, health and hygiene](#)

[Click here for all WHO's environmental health topics](#)

Regional public health and environment links

WHO African Region: www.afro.who.int/des/phe/index.html

WHO South-East Asia Region: www.searo.who.int/en/Section23.htm

WHO Western Pacific Region: www.wpro.who.int/environmental_health/

WHO Region of the Americas: www.paho.org/Selection.asp?

WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region: www.emro.who.int/ceha/

WHO European Region: www.euro.who.int/envhealth

Publications

[WHO handbook on indoor radon: A public health perspective – New](#)

[Protecting health from climate change: Top 10 actions for health professionals](#)

[WHO guidelines on hand hygiene in health care](#)

[Water safety plan manual](#)

Expand the network

Invite a friend, colleague, organization or network to join PHE e-News. Invite them to subscribe by sending an email to listserv@who.int with the following exact text "subscribeHealthandEnvironment News" in the **body** of the email message.

- Please forward this email to anyone who may be interested in its contents.
- To subscribe to this mailing list, please send an email to listserv@who.int with the following exact text "subscribe HealthandEnvironmentNews" in the **body** of your email.
- To unsubscribe from this mailing list, please send an email to listserv@who.int with the following exact text "unsubscribe HealthandEnvironmentNews" in the **body** of your email.
- PLEASE DO NOT REPLY TO THIS EMAIL.