For Health Make Mercury History

In keeping with World Health Assembly Resolution 67.11, public health impacts of exposure to mercury and mercury compounds: the role of WHO and ministries of public health in the implementation of the Minamata Convention, WHO hosted series of events dedicated to health on 22 September. Nearly four years since the global community adopted the Minamata Convention on Mercury, this global treaty that seeks to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury entered into force on 18 August 2017. A “Mercury Week” of events is taking place 22-29 September, under the banner “Make Mercury History” to coincide with first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (COP1), convened by UN Environment. See the infographics and click here for more information.

Preventing noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) by reducing environmental risk factors

This new publication highlights the impact environmental risk factors have on NCDs. It not only presents the burden of NCDs caused by environmental risks but also emphasizes on the key areas where action is needed to reduce this burden. It provides evidence on why environmental risk reduction is essential in NCD prevention and control strategies.

Following the release of Don’t pollute my future! The impact of the environment on children’s health and The public health impact of chemicals: knowns and unknowns, this publication is the third in the series. It draws on data from Preventing disease through healthy environments: a global assessment of the burden of disease from environmental risks. To access the publication, click here.

WHO at the XXI Congress on Safety and Health at Work

With the motto a Global Vision of Prevention the XXI Congress on Safety and Health at Work focused on three main topics – vision zero calling for a prevention culture at every level of the organization, healthy work – healthy life and people centered prevention creating sustainable strategies to protect people from occupational health risks. WHO was part of several key high level events, which highlighted the importance of safety, health and well-being. An information session on progress made under the WHO Global Plan of Action on Workers’ Health 2008-2017 was organized. It provided an opportunity for interested partners, stakeholders and individuals to hear about and most importantly provide their feedback on the progress made in the implementation of the ten-year global plan of action on workers’ health. The session was open to any party with a demonstrated interest in workers’ health. It was very well received and participants thanked WHO for giving them this opportunity to hear about progress made. Furthermore, a joint WHO/ILO session on Healthy work: Trends in Occupational Health was co-organized to raise awareness among congress participants and occupational safety and health community about the challenges and opportunities for protecting and promoting health at work arising from the Sustainable Agenda 2030. Besides, the Congress held an international media festival for prevention, Safeyouth@work congress and a series of technical symposia.

The Congress took place 3-6 September, Singapore and was a global forum in where participants could exchange knowledge, experiences and good practices. It provided an opportunity to network, strengthen relationships and explore opportunities for collaboration.
International lead poisoning prevention week of action

The fifth international lead poisoning prevention week of action will focus on efforts needed to eliminate lead paint. The Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint set a target that by 2020 all countries should have legally binding controls on lead paint. However, to date only 66 countries have confirmed that they have these controls in place. A lot remains to be done to meet the set target. The lead poisoning prevention week of action will take place from 22 to 28 October 2017. During the course of the week, activities around the world will be organized to raise awareness about the health hazards of lead and the need for action to stop lead exposure, including regulating lead paint. WHO, with partners, is providing materials and a resource pack for campaign organizers.

For further information, click here. To register your own lead poisoning prevention event, click here.

Role of youth in the intersectoral action for health and health equity – Action:SDG

WHO is establishing an Action: SDG e-platform to be able to provide action-oriented information services on social determinants of health (SDH) framed into the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is a user-oriented platform, offering a common logic model for action on SDH to key stakeholders who are able to influence people’s health and health equity across the policy cycle at local to international levels. During the Young Leaders for Health Conference that took place from 17 to 20 August in Berlin, WHO organized a workshop on Role of youth in the intersectoral action for health and health equity. The workshop led to the conceptualization of the role of youth (organizations) in addressing health inequities within the SDGs framework and their potential involvement in the Action: SDG network.

Using computed tomography for imaging asymptomatic people: are we doing more good than harm?

At the seminar, Imaging asymptomatic people: are we doing more good than harm? held during the International Conference on Preventing Overdiagnosis, WHO unveiled a framework that calls for improving safety and quality of the use of computed tomography (CT) in asymptomatic people for individual health assessment (IHA). Clinicians, medical students, researchers, policy-makers, consumer advocates, and scientific journalists unanimously welcomed WHO’s initiative and provided feedback on ways to improve radiation protection and clinical governance of IHA practices. Ensuring benefits outweigh risks, by promoting safe and appropriate use of radiation, underlines a key ongoing project on the justification of the use of CT in asymptomatic people for IHA, as part of the WHO Global Initiative on Radiation Safety in Health Care Settings.

The conference aimed to identify solutions to prevent overuse of medicine, e.g. the diagnosis of a disease that would never cause symptoms or death during a person’s lifetime and would therefore not have a net benefit. The conference was held from 17 to 19 August in Quebec, Canada. For more information, click here.

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Facts and Figures: NCDs and Environment

- Nearly two thirds of the 12.6 million deaths caused by the environment each year are due to NCDs.
- Ambient and household air pollution caused, respectively, 2.8 and 3.7 million NCD deaths from ischaemic heart disease (IHD), stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and lung cancer in 2012.
- Worldwide, almost one third of the cardiovascular disease burden is attributable to ambient and household air pollution (13% and 17% respectively), second-hand tobacco smoke (3%) and exposure to lead (2%).
- Globally, 29% of COPD deaths are attributable to household air pollution, 8% ambient and 11% in workplaces.
- Reducing air pollution from transport, energy generation and industrial emissions; and exposures to ionizing and UV radiation, and chemicals can prevent lung and other cancers. Workers in certain occupations are at particular risk.
- Healthier and safer workplaces could prevent around 1 million NCD deaths each year, including from COPD, pneumonia, pneumoconiosis, mesothelioma, lung and larynx cancers and leukaemia.

For more information, please click here.

SELECTED HEALTH TOPICS
FROM WHO'S PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT WEB SITES

International Programme on Chemical Safety
Social determinants of health

REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT LINKS

WHO Regional Office for Africa
WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia
WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific
WHO Regional Office for the Americas
WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean
WHO Regional Office for Europe

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Preventing noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) by reducing environmental risk factors
Innov8 approach case study: Leaving no adolescent behind in health and development in Indonesia
Summary of UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) 2017-2020 Strategy
Facilitator’s manual for the Innov8 approach for reviewing national health programmes to leave no one behind

For more information, please click here.