



The key messages for each theme of the European Public Health WEEK 2019 are based on evidence and resources shared by a variety of sources, including:

- The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe
- The European Commission (e.g. through the State of Health in the EU – Companion report 2017)
- EUPHA Sections, EUPHA members and EUPHANxt
- Experts from the Council of Occupational Therapists for European Countries (COTEC), World Federation of Physical Therapy – European Region (WCPT), Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians (EFAD) and Euro Youth Mental Health (EYMH).

Unless stated otherwise, messages refer to all 53 Member States of the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

Please refer to the [media toolkit](#) for guidance on how to best use the key messages.

Tuesday 14 May - Healthy environments

Motto of the day: “Healthy environments make healthy people.”

Key messages

1. Active travel such as walking and cycling brings significant health benefits and reduces air pollution and traffic congestion.
2. Urban green spaces provide opportunities for active lifestyles and protection against Summertime heat stress.
3. Contact with nature is an essential component of healthy cities.
4. Investing in integrated and inclusive models for urban development can promote healthy ageing by extending the age of independence for older and disabled people.
5. Safer roads save lives.
6. It is essential for human health and wellbeing to have easy access to adequate sanitation and sufficient amounts of safe water for drinking and hygiene at home, schools and health care facilities.

Other facts and figures

Air pollution

- Breathing is the most basic human function to sustain life. Yet, air pollution is the single largest environmental health risk in Europe.
- Every year, air pollution causes nearly 500 000 premature deaths across 41 European nations.
- Reducing air pollution to the WHO air quality guideline levels would result in gains of up to 22 months of average life expectancy. It would also contribute to reducing lung and heart diseases, particularly for vulnerable populations such as children, pregnant women and older people.
- In addition to cardiovascular- and respiratory-related non-communicable diseases, evidence is emerging of other effects of air pollution, such as diabetes, neurological development issues in children and neurological problems in adults.
- Vegetation along congested roads absorbs carbon dioxide and offers a physical barrier to direct exposure to humans.

Urban health

- Greater access to information regarding accessible services and places helps physically impaired people to get more engaged in society, and to maintain relationships with family and friends.
- Nature, or even pictures of nature in the office or living room, improves the perceived quality of the environment, attention restoration and wellbeing at home, work or school.
- Preventing exposure to chemicals in our daily lives can result in health cost savings of 10% of the global GDP.

Road safety

- Excessive noise seriously harms human health and interferes with people's daily activities at school, at work, at home and during leisure time. It can disturb sleep, cause physical and psychological problems, reduce performance and provoke changes in social behaviour.
- Road traffic injuries are a major public health problem in the WHO European Region and cause the premature deaths of some 120 000 people every year.
- Road traffic injuries cause a substantial economic loss to society: up to 3% of the gross domestic product of any given country.
- On average, 70 people die every day on European Union roads.

Water and sanitation

- Diseases related to inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) include diarrhea, but also other disease outcomes such as hepatitis A, legionellosis and soil-transmitted infections. Infants and children under 5 years of age are particularly vulnerable to diarrhea as a leading cause of malnutrition and death.
- In the Caucasus and central Asia, less than 40% of rural dwellers use piped water on premises.
- In the event of climate change bringing draught or extreme precipitation, disaster preparedness as well as organised prevention of vector-borne diseases are required.