

What is the Center for Disease Control?

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention, commonly referred to as the CDC, is the U.S. government agency responsible for tracking and investigating public health-related issues and trends. Organizationally, the CDC is a component of the Public Health Services (PHS), which falls under the cognizance of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The CDC is located in Atlanta, Georgia.



The mission of the CDC is to protect the health of American citizens and increase the health security of the country. They do this by developing and applying measures to prevent and control both disease and environmental factors that may negatively affect health. They also promote health in general and design health education activities for U.S. citizens. The CDC identifies preventable health problems; surveils the transmission and spread of disease; conducts laboratory investigations of pathogens; collects, analyzes, and distributes data; and is the lead PHS agency for developing and implementing responses to public health crises. The CDC is involved in the study, management, and prevention of any chronic, acute, infectious, curable or preventable health problem that affects the U.S., whether it is the result of nature, human error, or deliberate attack. As such, the CDC is responsible for putting together and fielding teams in order to stop the spread of disease epidemics.

When an abnormally large amount of people in a community, state, or country contract an infectious disease at more or less the same time, it is called an epidemic. An infectious disease is one that is caused by a pathogen (germ). Some common pathogens are viruses, bacteria, parasites, and fungi. Any plant, animal, or microorganism can potentially get sick as the result of an infectious disease. Typhus, influenza, the Black Death (Bubonic Plague), malaria, and smallpox are all examples of epidemics in history. When an epidemic grows so much that people in multiple countries and across multiple continents get sick, it is called a pandemic.