

A Day in the Life of Public Health

The Colorado sun wakes you up and the radio declares it's a "Blue Day." It's assuring to know that the air quality is good and that public health is around to monitor the pollution level and develop programs to address potential environmental problems. As you finish your morning shower, possibly taking for granted the safety of the water, you make a note to check into that ride-sharing idea that is being offered at your workplace—one way you can personally champion environmental quality in your city.

You hear your son laughing in the other room as your spouse gets him ready for the child care center. Public health helped assure that he is a healthy baby, thanks to early-intervention immunizations that ward off diseases that used to be deadly in the "olden days." You give him a glass of milk, confident in the knowledge that it is safe because public health checks retail stores to ensure proper handling and storage of dairy products.

You remember the call from your mother last night saying that she is relieved to have been screened by her doctor for a stomach virus that had created unusually high patient volumes over the past week or so. Public health works closely with health care providers to identify concerning trends in diseases and investigates outbreaks when they occur.

It's time to leave for work and you buckle seatbelts around yourself and your son. It is a habit now, thanks to public health educational messages that have greatly reduced automobile-related deaths in this country.

The child care center director welcomes your son and takes him into a room full of children. She and her staff have been trained in the public health measures necessary to run a safe, healthy program. Ultimately her center is trying to avoid the unnecessary infectious disease outbreaks that can occur with improper handwashing and sanitization practices. Historically, public health has looked at the root "causes" of diseases and addressed them at this prevention-oriented level.

Heading on to work, you stop and pick up a breakfast sandwich at your favorite fast food restaurant. You know that the quality of the food is good because the local health department inspectors have awarded 95 out of 100 possible points, ensuring that all safety standards have been met. Then, a recurring public health message comes to mind: "I need to limit my fat intake because my cholesterol levels are high." Enjoying the last bites of your sandwich, you make a conscious decision to get up earlier the next day and have a breakfast at home consisting of whole grain cereal and fresh fruit.

Work goes well and is relatively stress free. You feel good because you have started a lunchtime walking program with five of your colleagues. The exercise increases aerobic fitness and helps your stress level for the rest of the afternoon. Public health studies have shown the positive effects of avoiding or lessening the risks of chronic disease by exercising routinely.

You also are happy because your business has opted to become a "smoke free" working environment. It has become clear through the years that smoking has definite links to cancer and other chronic diseases. Public health regularly encourages individuals and organizations to give up smoking to improve overall quality of life.

It is the end of the day and you and your son stop at a local park to play with the toy boat he got for his birthday. Gently placing the boat in the pond, he jumps in surprise when he sees a fish swim by his hand. You smile and acknowledge one of the environmental aspects of public health: to evaluate and monitor the cleanliness of our lakes, rivers and streams.

The day grows dark and the two of you head home. Your spouse has made dinner so you spend the rest of the evening relaxing with your family and watching the news. There is a story about an injury prevention project. A local public health professional points out positive outcomes resulting from the community's prevention efforts and highlights some injury prevention measures that can be applied in the home.

Your family goes to sleep. The moon glows over the Rocky Mountains. As you lie in bed musing on the day, you realize that public health is not just one-day...or a celebratory week, but an everyday, everywhere, every person benefit we celebrate by living.

"Protecting and Promoting Public Health and Environmental Quality in the Community through People, Prevention & Partnerships"

