



## Public Health

Updated: August 14, 2003.

### Definition

Public health is concerned with the prevention, detection, and control of disease, and the protection and promotion of health on a community or population level.

### Discussion

Public health includes a set of biological, epidemiological, social, and statistical sciences and practices intended to measure, protect, and promote health on a population level. Public health overlaps many fields of medicine, given the growing population focus of biomedical research, the increasing concern with bioterrorism, and the importance of epidemiological methods in clinical trials.

### Scope and emphasis

NLM comprehensively collects scholarly and professional works on public health issues and crises. Works on the public health response to crises, disasters, and bioterrorism are of particular collecting importance, as are issues affecting health policy, health economics, and health services research. NLM collects works on epidemiology, population health, health disparities, and the history of public health, including historical demography related to health.

Public health issues (e.g., substance abuse, violence, birth control, HIV/AIDS) often engender a large body of literature not specifically addressed to health professionals or public health practitioners. NLM collects selectively materials of these types, emphasizing serious scholarly works, those characterizing diverse viewpoints, those chronicling the public health response of health professionals and policy makers, and those documenting the health information disseminated to the public at large. Works endorsed by health care associations, patient advocacy groups, and health policy organizations are of particular interest.

NLM generally excludes infrastructure and engineering of waste management, sanitation and water quality, except where this literature represents the focus of public health efforts in the region.

### Special considerations

Government documents, reports of international agencies ([WHO](#), [World Bank](#), etc.), domestic task forces, and Foundations are of particular interest.

Representative models of state and local health plans are collected when available.

Reports from oppositional or popular groups presenting perspectives different from those reflected in official documents are collected.

Selected popular educational materials such as posters, prints, photographs, pamphlets, and other ephemera are collected to document trends in public health and public health education. Current educational materials and services for the public are also linked from [MedlinePlus](#).