Worldwide, 12.6 million deaths could be prevented every year by making our environments healthier.

2.1 billion people lack safe drinking water at home, more than twice as many lack safe sanitation.

Some 3 in 10 people worldwide, or 2.1 billion, lack access to safe, readily available water at home, and 6 in 10, or 4.45 billion, lack safely managed sanitation, according to a new report by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. The Joint Monitoring Programme report, Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2017 Update and Sustainable Development Goal Baselines, presents the first global assessment of “safely managed” drinking water and sanitation services. The overriding conclusion is that too many people still lack access, particularly in rural areas. “Safe water, sanitation and hygiene at home should not be a privilege of only those who are rich or live in urban centres,” says Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization. “These are some of the most basic requirements for human health, and all countries have a responsibility to ensure that everyone can access them.”

Billions of people have gained access to basic drinking water and sanitation services since 2000, but these services do not necessarily provide safe water and sanitation. Many homes, healthcare facilities and schools also still lack soap and water for handwashing. This puts the health of all people—but especially young children—at risk for diseases, such as diarrhoea.

To access the report, press release and infographics click here.

More can be done to restrict sunbeds to prevent increasing rates of skin cancer.

WHO underscores national actions to limit the use of artificial tanning devices, such as sunbeds, in a bid to reduce the associated health risks, such as melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer. For more than three decades, the deliberate exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from artificial tanning devices used for cosmetic purposes has increased the incidence of skin cancer, and is driving down the age of first appearance, according to a new WHO report, Artificial tanning devices: public health interventions to manage sunbeds.

It is estimated that sunbed use is responsible for more than 450 000 non-melanoma skin cancer cases and more than 10 000 melanoma cases each year in the United States of America, Europe and Australia combined. The largest percentage of users are women, and in particular adolescents and young adults.

Click here to access the web story, WHO database on sunbed regulations, more on artificial tanning sunbeds and infographics.

New Innov8 Facilitator’s manual: a capacity building tool to ensure no one is left behind.

The Innov8 Facilitator’s manual is designed for persons conducting capacity-building workshops of applications of the Innov8 approach for reviewing national health programmes to leave no one behind. The manual – designed as a partnering publication to the Innov8 Technical handbook – provides an overarching introduction to the facilitation of a generic Innov8 review process entailing three workshops: sensitization, review and redesign, to aid and support the adaptation process.

Innov8 is an 8-step review process that supports programmes to be more equity-oriented, rights-based, gender-responsive and to address social determinants in order to contribute to the progressive realization of universal health coverage and the right to health.

Click here to access the facilitator’s manual and the technical handbook. For more on Innov8 approach click here.
WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network

The second meeting of the WHO Chemicals Risk Assessment Network was a combination of keynote lectures, presentations about ongoing network activities and group discussions to plan future activities. The development of a capacity-building strategy for the network was central to the meeting. Other themes addressed included combined exposures to multiple chemicals, human biomonitoring, identifying new and emerging risks and new scientific approaches for regulatory safety assessment.

WHO also launched its publication, Chemical mixtures in source-water and drinking-water during the meeting. This document provides an overview of available tools and practical recommendations to support the assessment and management of risks to human health associated with chemical mixtures in drinking-water and its sources, including through use of case studies. The meeting was hosted by the European Food Safety Authority and took place from 20 to 22 June 2017 in Parma, Italy. For more information, click here.

Large-scale international emergency exercise evaluating response to a nuclear emergency

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) along with 82 Member States and 10 international organizations held a two-day international emergency exercise that tested responses to a simulated accident at a nuclear power plant in Hungary. As part of its new Health Emergencies Programme, WHO is enhancing its emergency preparedness and response capacity. Simulation exercises are a vital element in this process as it is through testing that we can strengthen our systems and procedures.

Large-scale exercises of this kind are conducted every three to five years to test arrangements in place for fulfilling obligations under the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency. Based on a national exercise in a Member State, the Level 3 Convention Exercise (ConvEx-3) is IAEA’s highest level and most complex emergency exercise. It is designed to identify emergency preparedness and response best practices as well as areas for improvement. The exercise took place from 21 to 23 June 2017. For more information, click here.

United Nations agencies urge Europe’s action on 1.4 million annual deaths from polluted environments

WHO Regional Office for Europe, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Environment Programme call on European leaders to scale up action to prevent environment-related deaths and diseases affecting their population. Each year, at least 1.4 million Europeans die prematurely due to polluted environments; this corresponds to at least 15% of Europe’s total deaths. Around half of these deaths are due to outdoor and indoor air pollution. European citizens lose 50 million years of healthy life from environmental risks annually.

This call to action came as the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health opened in Ostrava, Czech Republic. On 13–15 June 2017, over 600 representatives from the 53 countries of the WHO European Region gathered together with international and nongovernmental organizations to sign a declaration committing them to prioritize action on environmental risks to health by 2018.

For more information, click here.

SELECTED HEALTH TOPICS FROM WHO’S PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT WEB SITES
Water sanitation hygiene
Ultraviolet radiation
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
Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2017 Update and Sustainable Development Goal Baselines
Artificial tanning devices: public health interventions to manage sunbeds
Facilitator’s manual for the Innov8 approach for reviewing national health programmes to leave no one behind

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Facts and Figures
Sunbeds and health
• Sunbeds, sunlamps and tanning booths emit harmful levels of UVR that can be at least as intense as midday tropical sunlight, and increase the risk of developing melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer.
• Other health risks from sunbeds include sunburns, accelerated skin ageing, eye inflammation and suppressed immune system.
• Sunbeds have been found to pose a specific risk for melanoma, independent of skin type and of solar exposure.
• Melanoma risk increases with younger age of first sunbed use and with greater lifetime use of sunbeds.
• Research shows that people who have used a sunbed at least once at any stage in their life have a 20% higher risk of developing melanoma than people who have never used a sunbed.
• The first use of sunbeds before the age of 35 increases the risk of developing melanoma by 59%.

For more information, please click here.

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