



## **CLEAN AIR AND WATER**

This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

The air we breathe and the water we drink are both vital components of our health. Nevertheless, bacteria, pollutants, and other contaminants can alter life-giving air and water into health-threatening hazards. Scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention work to protect the public from air and water-related health risks.

Air pollution is a major problem in modern society. Even though our air pollution is usually a greater problem in cities, pollutants contaminate air everywhere. Increases in air pollution have been linked to decreases in lung function and increases in heart attacks. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reports that high levels of air pollution directly affect people with asthma and other types of lung or heart disease. The elderly and children are especially vulnerable to the effects of air pollution.

As part of the CDC's efforts to combat the negative effects of polluted outdoor air, CDC staffers get involved in several areas related to air quality. The largest of these initiatives is the National Asthma Control Program, started in 1999. The program works with as many as 45 different partners, and funds programs like the 15-state Inner City Asthma Intervention program.

While modernization has increased the risks associated with air pollution, technological advances have decreased the health threats posed by water. Drinking water supplies in the United States are among the safest in the world. Most of the time the water we use is completely safe and not a cause for worry. EPA has laws that regulate the levels of contaminants allowed in drinking water supplied by public water systems, such as public water utility companies. Private domestic wells are not regulated by the EPA and private well owners are responsible for making sure their water is safe. Routine annual well maintenance checks by a qualified water well systems contractor are recommended to help prevent water quality problems.

In its quest to help ensure safe drinking water to people around the world, CDC works with a host of international health organizations, governments, and academia to develop strategies for improving access to safe water. Among these efforts is the "Water Plus" program. Just two years old, and operating throughout the Caribbean and Latin America, the program offers a blueprint for helping developing nations safely handle water supplies from the source of initial supplies until it is ready to drink. It includes assistance in building water safety plants, training, and recommendations on keeping water supplies safe.

These efforts, as well as other programs to ensure our access to clean air and water, are featured on the CDC website and provide a glimpse into the work of environmental health scientists to promote our health and quality of life.

To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family and your community, please visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).