



Public Health  
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé  
publique du Canada

The Public Health Agency of Canada

# Healthy Canadians: A Healthier World



Canada 

**The Public Health  
Agency of Canada**


**Promoting and protecting the health  
of all Canadians**

[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca)

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## Public health is the foundation of a prosperous society

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) serves to promote and protect the health of Canadians. As the federal government's lead on public health, PHAC pursues a vision of healthy Canadians and communities in a healthier world. PHAC is led by the Chief Public Health Officer, who reports to and advises the Minister of Health and communicates with Canadians on public health matters.

Public health asks two questions: What are the causes of poor health? How do we address those causes before they become problems?

# A strong public health system saves lives

Our goal is to help Canadians achieve and maintain physical and mental wellness, and to protect them from ongoing and future health threats. The good health of our country concerns us all—individuals, families, communities, health professionals and governments. At the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), we prepare for national public health emergencies. We explore the causes of and work to prevent disease and injury. We also work to raise awareness of the fundamental causes of poor health such as poverty, access to health care, the environment and continuing inequalities in health.

PHAC works at local, regional, national and international levels to build an effective national public health system and advance the knowledge that keeps Canadians healthy. PHAC works closely with the World Health Organization, and we participate in and support

partnerships with the Pan-Canadian Health Network, the National Collaborating Centres for Public Health, provincial and territorial governments, and other international and non-governmental organizations. PHAC's regional presence ensures leadership and coordinated action across the country.

## PHAC Origins

In March 2003, SARS struck Canada, with Toronto taking the brunt of the impact. The outbreak highlighted some of the strengths and weaknesses of the Canadian public health system and reminded us that infections ignore borders, defy jurisdictions and can cross the world with the speed of a passenger jet.

Canada's response: In September 2004, PHAC was established to strengthen public health in Canada.

**Our mission**

**To promote and protect the health of Canadians.**

**Public health is society's organized effort to keep people healthy. While healthcare concentrates on the medical needs of individuals, public health addresses the well being of communities and the population as a whole.**





# Engaging the nation and the world

Headquartered in Ottawa, Ontario and Winnipeg, Manitoba, PHAC maintains world-class laboratories in Winnipeg and Guelph, Ontario and six regional offices across Canada. In today's world, effective public health also requires a global effort, and so PHAC is an integral part of a national and international network linking public-health organizations in different countries, the academic community worldwide, and institutions like the World Health Organization, the Pan-American Health Organization and many more. This global partnership encourages the sharing of information, which means PHAC can effectively address potential risks from disease outbreaks and help mitigate the impacts of chronic diseases.



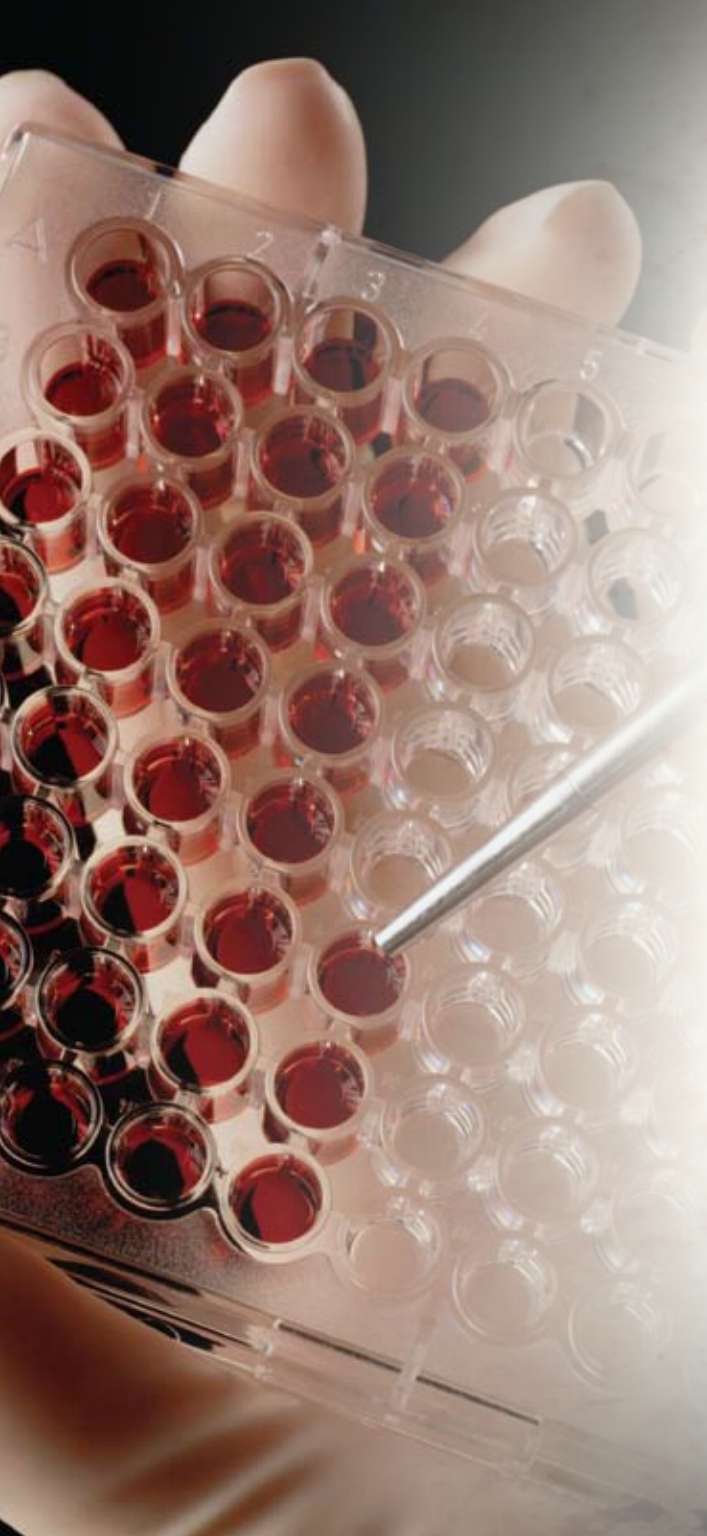
**Over 2,200 PHAC staff work in six regions across Canada. Our headquarters are in Ottawa and Winnipeg.**



PHAC brings together scientists, researchers, policy makers, public health professionals such as physicians and nurses, epidemiologists, analysts, technicians and support staff who are deeply dedicated to the current and future health of Canadians. We are proud of our leadership, our innovation and action in partnerships that are bringing our vision to life: Healthy Canadians, communities and a healthier world.

Working at PHAC can mean saving people's lives. At PHAC's National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) in Winnipeg, scientists work to confront disease outbreaks and study the deadliest human pathogens. With two mobile labs and a wealth of expertise at the NML, the PHAC team is standing by to respond to, and to help eradicate and control outbreaks before they spread.





# Protecting Canadians:

## Emergency Response, Vital Research and Communication

In a world where people are constantly on the move, PHAC's networks and surveillance systems help ensure Canada's health professionals have reliable access to current information about chronic and infectious disease trends and treatments, and physical and mental health and wellness.

At PHAC's National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg, a containment level 4 lab, PHAC scientists study the world's deadliest pathogens and develop preventative vaccines. We link this knowledge with our comprehensive experience in the social sciences—how people work, think and behave—to create integrated, real-world solutions to urgent and ongoing public health issues.

## Improving health where it matters most

PHAC works with health professionals, provincial and territorial governments and professional and voluntary organizations to effect real change where it matters most. By building these strong relationships at all levels, we are able to integrate and implement effective public health responses. We work to prevent and reduce the spread of infection. We also help Canadians identify and overcome the factors leading to obesity, poor mental health and chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease and respiratory diseases, which are some of the common, preventable and costly health problems facing Canadians.

## New world realities

Ever present are the possibilities of large-scale public health emergencies such as disease outbreaks, natural disasters, chemical, biological and nuclear events. To help safeguard Canada, PHAC continually prepares and plans for such crises. Our national health emergency management system stands ready to activate plans and communicate key information across our networks. We work closely with international agencies such as the World Health Organization to deliver a coordinated, global response. Already having been deployed to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Hong Kong, Angola, Kenya, Bangladesh and Vietnam, our international response teams are equipped with the latest technology to help stop the spread of disease at the source.


**Our staff includes biologists, medical doctors, public health nurses, epidemiologists, veterinarians, scientists, researchers and public health policymakers.**



## Saving lives: anywhere, anytime

Through its Health Emergency Response Teams (HERT), PHAC provides access to trained, multi-disciplinary health emergency response personnel located across Canada. This PHAC initiative supports an all hazards pan-Canadian emergency response system that is integrated and flexible. The HERTs, as well as the equipment and supplies located across Canada, can be combined to assist the provincial and territorial response to health emergencies of any size.





At PHAC, our work continues the long, proud tradition of public health victories in Canada. Such Canadian triumphs range from clean drinking-water initiatives and small pox eradication to today's HPV vaccine programs that protect thousands of Canadian women from contracting cancer. In response to the SARS outbreak in 2003, PHAC has built a national emergency preparedness and response program that affirms Canada as a world leader in public health practice.



## Collective Efforts to Advance Our Collective Health

Adopting a balanced and nutritious diet, quitting smoking, drinking moderate amounts of alcohol, reducing stress and exercising regularly are all simple ways we can make positive health changes as individual Canadians. Even the simple act of thorough hand washing can greatly improve our overall wellness by preventing the spread of infectious disease.

Research clearly shows, however, that we must go beyond mere behavioural change. To affect significant



and lasting improvements, we must build on the impact of our individual efforts. We must work together in our communities and at the national level to address the social and economic determinants that give rise to ill health: poverty, illiteracy, environments that limit opportunities for exercise, poor access to fresh foods, inequalities in our health system.

**PHAC is at the forefront of a societal effort that will ensure Canadians experience the full economic and social benefits of improved health.**

**Of 58 million deaths worldwide in 2005, approximately 35 million were the result of chronic diseases.**

### **Mobilizing nationwide expertise**

Our partnerships with Health Canada, the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, the Pan-Canadian Public Health Network, the National Collaborating Centres for Public Health and other federal and provincial stakeholders reach across jurisdictions to mobilize the skills and capabilities of experts from coast to coast.

Statistics reinforce the potential benefit of our collective efforts. We have an opportunity to reduce the tens of billions of dollars lost each year due to loss of productivity associated with premature mortality in Canada. A healthier population also reduces the burden on our healthcare system, resulting in better quality and more timely care for those who truly need it.

**PHAC is committed to understanding and communicating the root causes of poor health. How we shape our environment--where and how we live, work and play--profoundly affects our health and understanding what we can do as a society to improve the fundamental conditions for health for all Canadians is what drives PHAC's health promotion and chronic disease prevention branch. The goal: a strong, prosperous society in which education, shelter, food, income and the environment serve to underpin, rather than undermine, our collective health.**



# A Stronger Public Health System Means Healthier Canadians

Canada is renowned throughout the world for a public health system that fosters and supports excellent health promotion programs, groundbreaking scientific and epidemiological research and internationally recognized expertise. PHAC strengthens this system by addressing a variety of significant challenges, such as the burden of chronic disease on the healthcare system. As a new federal agency, we are also expanding capacity, expertise and readiness within PHAC and among all health professionals across Canada.

PHAC is building a comprehensive public health system through the careful stewardship of our people, partnerships and resources. Dedicated to service and committed to excellence, we have the tools, knowledge, vision and leadership to overcome today's greatest public health challenges for the benefit of Canadians and people around the world.

**PHAC works with numerous national and international partners on a wide variety of crucial initiatives related to the health and well being of Canadians:**

- Canadian Partnership Against Cancer
- Healthy living and chronic disease initiatives
- National Immunization Strategy
- Aboriginal public health strategy
- Health promotion and injury prevention for children and seniors
- HIV/AIDS and other vaccine initiatives
- International avian and pandemic influenza preparedness
- Healthcare acquired infections
- Emergency management of disease outbreaks at airports and ports of entry to Canada
- Food-and water-borne outbreak management
- Specialized training in applied epidemiology
- Promoting science and innovation in public health

