



Achievements in United States Public Health

During the 20th century, life expectancy at birth for U.S. residents rose by 62%, from 47.3 years to 76.8 years, reflecting remarkable improvements in population health at all life stages. Here are the 10 public health achievements that contributed to these improvements, presented in no particular order.

Vaccine-Preventable Diseases



New vaccines have significantly reduced cases, hospitalizations, deaths, and health-care costs from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Prevention & Control of Infectious Diseases



Improvements in public health infrastructure and targeted prevention reduced COVID-19, advanced lab techniques, and enhanced surveillance.

Tobacco Control



Evidence-based policies and interventions, such as cigarette taxes and smoke-free laws have significantly reduced tobacco use.

Maternal & Infant Health



Decreased neural tube defects and expanded newborn screening, have led to significant improvements in early intervention.

Motor Vehicle Safety



Mortality rates and injuries have declined due to safer vehicles, roadways, and behaviors influenced by protective policies like seat belt laws and graduated driver licensing.

Cardiovascular Disease Prevention



Heart disease and stroke have seen declining mortality rates due to decreased prevalence of cardiovascular risk factors and advancements in treatments.

Occupational Safety



Implementation of best practices programs and comprehensive agricultural injury prevention initiatives resulted in notable declines in injury rates and fatalities.

Cancer Prevention



Evidence-based recommendations have led to improved screening rates and reduced mortality from various cancers.

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention



Childhood lead poisoning has declined from 88.2% to 0.9% from 1976–2008, thanks to state and federal prevention laws.

Preparedness & Response



Significant improvements include enhanced response capacity, better laboratory and epidemiology capabilities, and the adaptation of existing systems.

