# What is the CDC – Quick Tips



**History**

In 1946, the Communicable Disease Center (CDC) was opened in the old Office of Malaria Control in War Areas in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. Its mission at the time was to work with state and local health officials in the fight against malaria, typhus and other communicable diseases. Through the 1960s, the CDC started to broaden its focus to include polio and then smallpox. Over time the CDC established closer working ties with the states throughout the U.S.

The 1970s saw the name of the CDC change to the Center for Disease Control to better reflect its broader mission in preventive health. In 1973, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) became part of the CDC.

In the 1980s, the agency was again renamed, this time to the Centers for Disease Control to reflect a change in its organizational structure. The 1980s also saw the CDC becoming much more diversified. It established the Violence Epidemiology Branch and the Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Also, the Office of Smoking and Health was incorporated into the CDC.

In the 1990s, the CDC once again changed its name, this time to include “Prevention” but retained the initials CDC.

**The CDC’s Current Role in Protecting Health and Safety**

The mission of the CDC is to promote health and quality of life by preventing and controlling disease, injury and disability. It works to accomplish this goal with the help of partners throughout the nation and world to monitor health, detect and investigate health problems, conduct research to enhance prevention, develop and advocate sound public health policies, implement prevention strategies, promote healthy behaviors, foster safe and healthful environments and provide leadership and training.

In 1981, with the California Department of Health, the CDC reported the first cases of an illness that would later be called acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). In 1987, the CDC reported a strong association between Reye Syndrome and aspirin, noting that 90 percent of cases could be preventable by reducing aspirin treatment for children. In May of 1993, an outbreak of an unexplained pulmonary illness occurred in southwestern United States. Virologists used new methods to pinpoint virus genes at the molecular level. The new disease caused by the virus is called hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, or HPS.

New diseases have the potential ability to spread across the globe in just days. The CDC plays a critical role in controlling these diseases and travels at a moment's notice to investigate outbreaks at home and abroad.

**CDCs Current Role in Providing Credible Information to Enhance Health Decisions**

The CDC works with public health and grassroots partners, the media and the Internet to make sure the best health and safety information is available to the communities and people that need it. Some examples of actions the CDC takes to communicate information include the following:

- Since 1961, the CDC has taken over the publication of the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), which publishes important data on deaths and certain diseases from every state every week.
- Since 1995, the CDC has published the Emerging Infectious Diseases Journal, which is a peer-reviewed publication established expressly to promote the recognition of new and reemerging infectious diseases around the world.
- The National Vital Statistics System produces key indicators of health from birth and death certificates.
- The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is the primary source of information on the prevalence of risk behaviors among Americans and their perceptions of a variety of health issues.
- The CDC has established seven Centers of Excellence for Birth Defects Prevention Research across the country.

The CDC continues to work with both foreign and domestic agencies to inform all people of current global health issues. Some of the new issues the CDC is dealing with include:

- Meeting the health and safety needs of a changing workforce
- Unitizing new technologies to provide credible health information through multimedia tools such as podcasts, mobile apps and blogs to their resume of services that help keep people healthy and safe.
- Protecting individuals against emerging infectious diseases including bioterrorism by offering general information, fact sheets and contact information in the event of an emergency all available today at the CDC website cdc.gov
- The CDC continues to work toward fostering safe and healthy environments by offering on-line tools and resources with up to date on line information.

**Source**

http://www.cdc.gov

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