



# FROM PHRED'S HEAD

*A top five list directly from your local health director.*

## Top five contributions public health has made to society!

Hippocrates in his famous essay **On Airs, Waters and Places** written in 400 B.C. argued that the airs we breathe, the waters we drink, and the places we live determine our life expectancy. Because these three elements are the basis of life, public health has focused most of its attention on addressing factors that can provide water, clean air, and reduce health disparities due to *place of birth*. Here's a list of public health's top five contributions to society.



### 1. Clean Drinking Water.

Public Health began with a combined focus on epidemiology and public works engineering. The cholera outbreak in London in 1854 demonstrated that contaminated well water killed 616 Londoners. From that point forward, Public Health has worked tirelessly to ensure the sanitation of all public water supplies. When you drink from a safe well, turn on your faucet and get a glass of pure water, or swim in a chlorinated swimming pool, thank Public Health.



### 2. Sanitary Sewer.

As cities grew so did problems of human sewage disposal. When humans come into close contact with sewerage, diseases like typhoid fever, typhus, and dysentery result. Public Health pioneered methods for engineering waste water systems that allow us to recirculate contaminated water through treatment plants thereby removing all the infectious agents. When you flush your toilet or wash something you shouldn't down your sink, thank Public Health for making sure that your sewerage will be treated properly and safely.



### 3. Clean Air.

At one time many of our peoples lived in places where daytime appeared to be nighttime due to pollutants in the air. Such conditions led to the development of diseases such as asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, and possibly cancer. Public Health led the effort to pass laws forcing businesses and industries to develop manufacturing processes which did not pollute the air. Auto manufacturers were forced to build cars meeting stringent auto emissions standards. So the next time you drive to Charlotte on a summer morning and enjoy observing the city skyline, thank Public Health again. For it was just a few years ago when that skyline was enshrouded in smog every hot summer morning.



### 4. Health Disparities.

It is rather simple to look at vital statistics for different countries around the world and quickly realize that being born in Sweden has definite advantages over being born in Syria. Likewise being born in Cabarrus County, North Carolina has definite advantages over being born in Robeson County, North Carolina. Public Health has made a huge difference in reducing health disparities through services and health programs that assure access to acceptable care on a continuous basis without respect to ability to pay. And so again, thank Public Health for leading the way in removing health disparities and trying mightily to address inequitable health care based on country of birth.



### 5. Immunizations.

No longer do hundreds of thousands of people die each from preventable communicable diseases like measles, whooping cough, polio, and smallpox. Public Health worked closely with vaccine developers and then over several decades administered enough vaccines to afford herd immunity to millions of people around the globe. Smallpox was eradicated from the entire planet and polio is very close to being extinguished. So again thank Public Health that your siblings and your children are protected from deadly communicable diseases.

Visit us at [www.cabarrushealth.org](http://www.cabarrushealth.org) to find out about the great services Cabarrus Health Alliance offers to Cabarrus County and the surrounding area!



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