



EPIDEMIC & PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS & PREVENTION



PUBLIC HEALTH & SOCIAL MEASURES (PHSM) DURING HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Measuring the effectiveness of PHSM and their impact on health and social and economic well-being

PHSM reduce person-to-person contacts and/or make them safer.

At the same time, unintended negative consequences of PHSM need to be mitigated.

WHO works to achieve effective and context-specific PHSM implementation to maximize the benefits of PHSM while keeping their health, social and economic burden to a minimum and justifiable.

Background

PHSM are a key strategy for reducing the transmission of pathogens and refer to actions including non-pharmaceutical interventions which can reduce the transmission of infectious diseases like COVID-19. For example, individuals can wear a mask and keep a physical distance; communities can restrict public gatherings and modify school opening; governments and communities may put in place contact tracing, business closures and travel restrictions. PHSM contribute to lowering infections, hospitalization rates and deaths, hence PHSM can also reduce the pressure on the health care system and buy time to develop and produce pharmaceutical interventions and prepare to respond to ongoing epidemics and pandemics.

Benefits of PHSM need to be weighed against unintended negative consequences (intervention burden) for individuals and societies. These can include worsening physical and mental health, economic hardship as well as social and gender inequalities.

Objectives

- To establish global monitoring and reviews for PHSM data and research
- To strengthen PHSM research methodology
- To increase precision in PHSM decision-making
- To ensure a systematic integration of PHSM into the existing leadership and governance



World Health
Organization

Areas of work

1 Global PHSM research and database

- Increase access to and use of global, multidisciplinary and context-specific knowledge about PHSM effectiveness, unintended negative consequences, decision-making, and implementation strategies

2 PHSM research methodology

- Conduct and contribute research using a harmonized conceptual understanding of PHSM and support methodological, legal, ethical and political challenges of PHSM research, supported by the establishment of a global research agenda for PHSM, a conceptual model and flexible taxonomy of interventions, and blueprints for PHSM studies

3 Precision in PHSM decision-making

- Support decision-makers to make transparent, context-specific, evidence-driven PHSM policies
- Take costs and benefits of interventions into account and ensure social protection policies and community measures to mitigate the health, social and economic burden of PHSM to protect people living in vulnerable conditions from a disproportionate socioeconomic and health burden

4 Whole-of-society approach in PHSM leadership and governance

- Engage stakeholders in all relevant sectors at all levels and define common targets and standards, collaborative and complementary governance and scalable and sharable resources

Future priorities

- Systematic integration of PHSM into the existing leadership and governance of health emergency management and health systems in all relevant sectors at national, subnational and community levels
- Comparable PHSM data and research
- Systematic documentation and exchanges of regional and local PHSM knowledge
- Integration of precautionary principle – taking anticipatory, preventative actions in the face of uncertainty and the absence of robust historical data to prevent the risk and impact of inaction – in PHSM implementation to catalyse an agile response

Key achievements

- ✓ Launch of the PHSM initiative during a public press conference by WHO Director-General and the Norwegian Minister for Health and Care Services on 14 June 2021
- ✓ Global technical consultation organized from 31 August to 2 September 2021 with 67 multidisciplinary experts from 25 countries representing research, policy and practice
- ✓ An umbrella review of PHSM evidence syntheses initiated together with the Norwegian Institute of Public Health and the American University of Beirut
- ✓ The PHSM Working Group under the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Infectious Hazards (STAG-IH) established
- ✓ The internal Steering Group on PHSM established



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More information

<https://www.who.int/activities/measuring-the-effectiveness-and-impact-of-public-health-and-social-measures>

Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness and Prevention (EPP)
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WHO Health Emergencies Programme (WHE)