

Public Health is an exciting and expanding health field dedicated to promoting health and preventing disease. Public health focuses on societal and political issues that impact the health of all people, not just the individual.

Public health promotes health and the prevention of illness through

- Health policy development and regulation
- Disease research
- Health education
- Diagnosing, monitoring and investigating illnesses
- Empowering communities
- Evaluation of health services
- Linking people to personal health care services
- Ensuring an expert public health work force

Public health focuses on PREVENTION of illnesses. Traditional medicine focuses on TREATMENT of illnesses.

There are five main academic fields that lead to a career in public health:

Biostatistics

- Study and apply statistical methodology to address public health issues.

Epidemiology

- Study how disease and disability spread or are contained.

Health Policy and Management

- Study how health services are delivered to populations.

Health Education/Behavioral Science

- Study and implement practices for creating a health-educated populace and government.

Environmental Health

- Study how the environment affects human health.

Examples of public health careers

- Public health dentist
- Public health doctor
- Public health nurse
- Public health researcher
- Epidemiologist
- Biostatistician
- Health Administrator
- Public health educator:
- Maternal and child health
- International Health
- Chronic disease
- College Health
- Community Health
- Environmental Health
- Occupational Health
- Nutrition

Examples of employment opportunities for public health professionals

- World Health Organization (WHO)
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
- National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- Hospitals
- Not for profit agencies
- Federal, county and state public health agencies
- High schools, colleges and universities
- Corporations and small businesses

Common degrees include

- MHA: Master of Health Administration
- MHS: Master of Health Sciences
- MPH: Master of Public Health
- MPHE: Master of Public Health Education
- MS: Master of Science
- MSPH: Master of Science in Public Health
- DrPH: Doctor of Public Health
- PhD: Doctor of Philosophy
- ScD: Doctor of Science

Bachelor's degrees and joint degrees are also available.

Some schools offer a public health major (the UO does not); however, any major can lead to a public health career. Aim for a well-rounded curriculum of sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Here at the UO there are several Planning, Public Policy, and Management (PPPM), Sociology, and Anthropology courses that have an aspect of public health education that could benefit students interested in pursuing a public health career. Developing strong written and oral communication skills is also important in this field.

Experience

You must also have some experience before applying to a graduate program in public health. Listed below are some opportunities to get experience in the public health field:

Peer Health Internship

The UO offers an excellent, competitive peer health internship program. Peer health educators attend two terms of health and public health courses for graded credit and staff the Peer Health office in the UO Health Center. Peer Health educators also gain skills through creating and providing workshops, presentations, health marketing and writing health articles to UO students. For more information see: healthcenter.uoregon.edu/healthed/index.html.

Not-for-profit agencies

There are many agencies in our community that could use your volunteer help and provide useful experience.

Some examples of local agencies

- Food for Lane County
- Relief Nursery
- HIV Alliance
- Planned Parenthood
- Volunteers in Medicine
- Lane County Public Health
- White Bird Clinic

- American Red Cross
- Peace Corps Volunteer

The Peace Corps offers a great opportunity after your bachelor's degree to gain experience in another country, helping educate and provide public health resources to those in need. This is a two-year commitment; having foreign language skills is desired but not required (www.peacecorps.org).

AmeriCorps's Volunteer

AmeriCorps offers an opportunity to get experience in a public health career right here in the US. This is a one-year program that also includes a living allowance and small stipend towards college after your service (www.americorps.org).

UO Students for Global Health

UO Students for Global Health is committed to combating worldwide disease, focusing on HIV/AIDS and malaria. They have guest speakers, action events, fundraisers and help coordinate summer internships (uoglobalhealth.org).

Recommended Courses

While any major can lead to a public health career, you should plan to take a number of courses that are relevant to public health. Such courses can complete much of your general education requirement. The following courses address the requirements for many public health graduate programs. Academic Advising (364 Oregon Hall) has information on additional recommended courses.

General Education Courses Recommended for Pre-Public Health

Anthropology (Especially for International Public Health, Public Health Nutritionist, and Health Promotion/Education)

- 161 World Cultures (SS, IC)
- 165 Sexuality and Culture (SS, IP)
- 173 Evolution and Human Sexuality (SCI, IP)
- 175 Evolutionary Medicine (SCI)
- 314 Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective (SS, IP)

Biology (Especially for Health Promotion/Education/Behavior)

- BI 211, 212, 213, 214: General Biology (SCI)

Chemistry (Especially for Health Promotion/Education/Behavior)

- CH 221, 222, 223: General Chemistry (SCI)

Economics (Especially for Health Management and Policy)

- EC 201 Introduction to Economic Analysis: Microeconomics (SS) (Recommended by OSU)¹
- EC 202 Introduction to Economic Analysis: Macroeconomics (SS) (Recommended by OSU)

Ethnic Studies (Especially for Health Promotion/Education/Behavior)

- ES 101 Introduction to Ethnic Studies (SS, AC) (Recommended by OSU)

Mathematics (Required by most PH graduate programs)

- MATH 243 Probability and Statistics (BS or SCI)

Philosophy (Useful for all areas of Public Health)

- PHIL 102 Ethics
- PHIL 103 Critical Reasoning

Planning, Public Policy, and Management (Useful for all aspects of Public Health)

- PPPM 201 Introduction to Planning, Public Policy, and Management (SS)
- PPPM 202 Healthy Communities (SS) (Similar class is required in PH graduate programs)

Psychology (Especially for Health Promotion/Education/Behavior)

- PSY 201 Mind and Brain (SCI) (Recommended by OSU)
- PSY 202 Mind and Society (SS)
- PSY 366 Culture and Mental Health (SS, IP)

Notes:

¹ The Oregon Master of Public Health Program is a collaboration among Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU), Oregon State University (OSU), and Portland State University (PSU) and the main source for graduate-level Public Health education in Oregon. OSU offers detailed lists of recommended courses for several tracks included in this program.

Sociology (Especially for Health Promotion/Education/Behavior)

- 204 Introduction to Sociology (SS) (Recommended by OSU)
- 207 Social Inequality (SS, IP)
- 301 American Society (SS)
- 303 World Population and Social Structure (SS, IC)
- 304 Community, Environment, and Society (SS)
- 305 America's Peoples (SS, AC)

Additional Courses Similar to PH Graduate Program Requirements

- PPPM 331 Environmental Management
- PPPM 413 Quantitative Methods
- PPPM 414 Introduction to Research Design
- PPPM 422/522 Grant Proposal Writing
- PPPM 460/560 Health Policy
- PPPM 465/565 Program Evaluation

Many other courses (general education, major, or elective) may also be relevant. Contact individual programs and consider your own goals and interests to explore other options.

Online Resources:

- Pathways to Public Health (pathwaystopublichealth.org)
- Association of Schools of Public Health (www.asph.org)
- Schools of Public Health Application Service (www.sophas.org)
- Council of Accredited MPH Programs (www.mphprograms.org)
- Council on Education for Public Health (www.ceph.org)
- Public Health Jobs.net (www.publichealthjobs.net)
- American Public Health Association: (www.apha.org)
- Idealist (www.idealists.org)
- What is Public Health.org (www.whatispublichealth.org)
- Oregon Public Health Association (www.oregonpublichealth.org)
- Oregon Master of Public Health Program (www.oregonmph.org)

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