

Current Health Event

Health Impact of Waste Crisis in Lebanon

Since July 17, 2015 the Naameh landfill which receives 89% of Lebanon waste was closed. This led to the accumulation of piles of rubbish in the streets; as the mounds got higher and higher people started "backyard burning" (burning trash in the open) in crowded residential areas and garbage trucks illegally dumped the collected wastes in rivers and valleys. The country was getting into an environmental crisis.

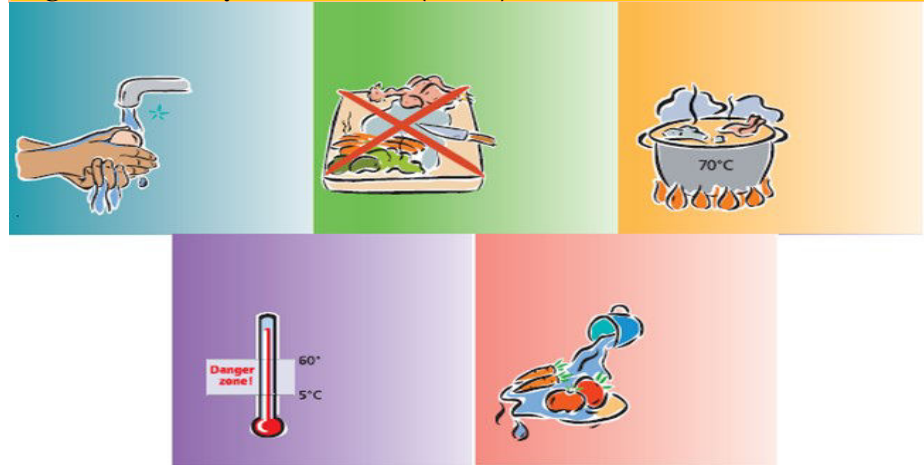
Editorial note:

The current waste disposal crisis can impact negatively on human health and environment by: inhalation of toxic gases, breeding of vectors (insects and rodents), contamination of streams and rivers, contamination of soil, contamination of drinking and underground water, and decrease in the quality of life to local community.

Burning trash in the open produces many pollutants and dangerous health conditions can be caused by inhaling or ingesting even small amounts of these pollutants. Small children, the elderly, or people with preexisting respiratory conditions can be especially vulnerable to some of these pollutants. The health consequences are: upper airway irritation, neurologic symptoms (headache, fatigue), acute respiratory symptoms (shortness of breath), asthma and chronic lung disease exacerbations and cancers (long term exposures).

The condition is also favorable for

Figure: The 5 keys to safe food. (WHO)



occurrence of vector-borne diseases transmitted by mosquitoes, ticks and rodents.

Water pollution due to domestic waste is of major concern, because diseases such as typhoid, cholera, jaundice, dysentery, diarrhoea, etc. are infectious diseases which spread through contaminated water. Sometimes this leads to the outbreak of epidemics and mass illness.

Unclean food and water can cause diarrhea and other diseases. Reduce your risk by sticking to safe food and water habits.

Bugs (like mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas) can spread a number of diseases. You can reduce your risk by taking steps to prevent bug bites.

Stay safe outdoors and around water.

Follow the 5 keys to safe food:

1. Keep clean
2. Separate raw and cooked
3. Cook thoroughly
4. Keep food at safe temperatures
5. Use safe water and raw materials

WHO and the MoPH are stepping up the efforts to improve public health preparedness to mitigate risk of cholera and other epidemic diarrhoeal diseases throughout the country particularly in areas where large number of Syrian refugees are living in overcrowded conditions.

Cumulative Notifiable Diseases in Lebanon*				
Disease	2014	2015**	Sep.	Oct.
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
Polio	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
AFP	53(16)	85(13)	9(2)	5(1)
Measles	235(107)	30(9)	1(1)	0(0)
Mumps	736(117)	1420(346)	32(11)	9(6)
Pertussis	87(25)	37(6)	0(0)	0(0)
Rabies	1(0)	2(0)	2(0)	0(0)
Rubella	18(12)	9(1)	0(0)	0(0)
Tetanus	2(0)	3(0)	0(0)	1(0)
Viral Hep. B	218(33)	140(22)	1(0)	0(0)
Water/Food Borne Diseases				
Brucellosis	252(36)	296(51)	20(5)	0(0)
Cholera	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Hydatid cyst	16(2)	14(1)	0(0)	0(0)
Typhoid fever	546(33)	426(46)	58(1)	24(5)
Viral Hep. A	2582(911)	791(154)	53(5)	1(0)
Other Diseases				
Leishmaniasis	663(638)	32(23)	0(0)	0(0)
Meningitis	232(35)	286(51)	20(3)	3(0)
Viral Hep C	100(6)	65(3)	0(0)	0(0)

*Numbers in brackets refer to Syrian **as of 23 Oct 2015