



Public Health

Scouts BSA · Health & Safety

Name

Started

Completed

Public health is about keeping whole communities healthy, from clean water to vaccines to safe food. You'll learn how diseases spread and how people work together to stop them. It's a field full of real heroes you may never hear about.

Requirements

Every official requirement, in plain language. Check the official wording when you sign off (scouting.org/merit-badges/public-health/). Tips and examples are ideas, not extra requirements.

1 Diseases and how they spread

Tips for this section: Make a chart showing how each disease spreads, like through air, water, food, or insects.

Example for this section: Make a chart with columns for how each disease spreads: through the air (COVID-19, influenza), food (E. coli, salmonellosis, botulism), ticks or mosquitoes (Lyme disease, West Nile virus), wounds (tetanus), and blood or body fluids (AIDS, hepatitis). Add one way to prevent each.

- ☐ **1a** Explain what public health means

- ☐ **1b** Explain how each of these is caught: E. coli, Lyme disease, tetanus, coronavirus (COVID-19), AIDS, salmonellosis, and encephalitis

- ☐ **1c** Choose four of these and explain how each one is caught and how it might be prevented: influenza, hepatitis, West Nile virus, syphilis, botulism, meningitis, gonorrhea, emphysema, lead poisoning, herpes

- ☐ **1d** For all 10 diseases listed in 1c (not just your four), explain the type (viral, bacterial, environmental, toxin), possible vectors, ways to prevent exposure or spread, and available treatments

2 Immunization

Tips for this section: Ask a parent or doctor which vaccines you've had and what each one protects against.

- ☐ **2a** Explain what immunization means

- ☐ **2b** Name eight diseases young children should be immunized against, two that everyone needs booster shots for from time to time, and one vaccine everyone should get every year

- ☐ **2c** Discuss with your counselor which diseases and conditions from 1b have no vaccine available today

- ☐ **3** Discuss how unsafe drinking water spreads disease. Demonstrate two ways to make water safe at camp, and explain how to wash, dry, and keep dishes and utensils clean at home and in camp
- Tip:** Talk about where your drinking water comes from, and try two safe methods with your counselor or an adult.
- Example:** Explain where your town's water comes from and how it's treated. Then show two ways to make water safe at camp with an adult, like a rolling boil and an approved filter or chemical treatment, and why cloudy water should be strained first.

- ☐ **4** Explain what a vector is and how to control insects and rodents at home, in your community, and at camp, and why it matters. Include which vectors one person can control and which need long-term community action

Tip: Look around your home and yard for places pests could breed, like standing water.

Example: Pick mosquitoes and ticks. Explain what diseases they can carry, then list prevention steps like emptying flowerpot saucers, using repellent, wearing long pants on trails, and doing tick checks after a hike.

5 Facility visit: Choose 1 of 2

Tips for this section: Ask your counselor or the local health department to help arrange a visit.

Example for this section: On a wastewater plant tour with your troop, note each stage: screens, settling tanks, bacteria breaking down waste, and disinfection. Afterward, explain how each step protects people downstream.

- ☐ **5a** With your parent's and counselor's OK, tour a city wastewater treatment plant or a place in your community that manages solid waste

- ☐ **5a1** Describe how the facility treats and gets rid of sewage or solid waste safely

- ☐ **5a2** Talk with your counselor about your visit and what you learned

- ☐ **5a3** Describe how to dispose of sewage and solid waste when camping in the wilderness

- ☐ **5b** With your parent's and counselor's OK, tour a place that serves food, like a restaurant or a school cafeteria

- ☐ **5b1** Watch how food is prepared, handled, and stored, and learn how the facility keeps it from being contaminated

- ☐ **5b2** Find out what conditions let microorganisms multiply in food, how to stop them from growing or spreading, and how to kill them

- ☐ **5b3** Discuss why a thermometer should be used to check food temperatures

- ☐ **5b4** Talk with your counselor about your visit and what you learned

6 Health dangers

Tips for this section: Talk with your counselor about how pollution, tobacco, and drugs harm people and communities.

- ☐ **6a** Describe how air, water, and noise pollution can harm health

- ☐ **6b** Describe how tobacco use and alcohol and drug abuse can harm health

- ☐ **6c** Describe how misusing illegal drugs and prescription drugs can harm health

7 Public health agency

Tips for this section: Check your local health department's website to learn what they do and what health trends they track.

Example for this section: On your health department's website, find your community's four leading causes of death and four leading causes of disease for a recent year. Explain what the department is doing about them and what it would do if a disease outbreak started in your area.

7a Learn about a health agency: Choose 1 of 2

- ☐ **7a1** With your parent's and counselor's OK, visit a public health agency for your city, county, or state, or a federal one

- ☐ **7a2** With your parent's and counselor's OK, get to know the website of a city, county, state, or federal health agency

7b Agency study (after finishing 7a)

- ☐ **7b1** Compare your community's four leading causes of death with its four leading causes of disease for any of the last five years, and explain how the agency is working to lower both

- ☐ **7b2** Explain what your health agency does when there is a disease outbreak

- ☐ **7b3** Discuss the help the agency can give after disasters like floods, storms, tornadoes, and earthquakes; you may include cleanup

- ☐ **8** Pick a public health job you're interested in, learn what schooling, training, and experience it takes, and talk it over with your counselor

Tip: Pick a job like nurse, inspector, or epidemiologist and find out what they do each day.