

Urban Design for Health

How can we use urban design to promote physical activity and healthy diets in cities?

Virtual Symposium

14, 15 and 16 April

11:00 – 12:30 CET

Scope and purpose

Context

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are a major cause of death and disability around the world. The design of our urban environments limit people's ability to be active as part of daily life and a lack of access and availability of healthy food options, combined with the prominence of outlets selling alcohol and tobacco products are exacerbating this epidemic in many cities. Health research shows that design can impact today's biggest challenges around the physical, mental and social well-being of communities around the world. But how to do it in practice? How to initiate integrated interventions that put the health and well-being of people at the center of planning and designing cities?

The *WHO European Office for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases* is organising a virtual health symposium to act as a platform for learning and exchange thereby encouraging action in this field. It is not a traditional conference but a new type of learning event that will help you advance a health initiative in your city.

Virtual symposium

The virtual symposium will take the form of a plenary open to all interested participants followed by practical workshops with selected cities on each day. The plenary session will provide participants with expert advice and inspiration, as well as practical examples and tools to develop action plans and new approaches to promoting physical activity and healthy diets in cities. Expert presentations and an exchange of experience and ideas will aim to inspire the implementation of innovative solutions to the prevention of noncommunicable diseases through urban design.

Immediately following the plenary session, workshops will be held with selected cities to connect health and urban design professionals with practitioners and local city teams to advance specific, real-life initiatives. The initiatives can range from city-wide, strategy and planning level to more neighborhood or street level interventions. The idea is to further develop projects together across disciplines and to investigate how to demonstrate the impact of interventions to a wider range of stakeholders.

Outcomes

The symposium will equip participants with:

- Analytical tools to assess the current situation for how planning, transportation, and public realm investments are paying off;
- Design and planning skills in delivering projects that encourage physical activity and healthy food behaviors while also improving the general quality of life of different urban populations;

- Metrics for evaluating success of projects – what they are and how to measure;
- Methodology and analysis tools for translating behavioral trends to inform design decisions.

Meeting format & participants

The virtual symposium will take place over three consecutive days and each day will be divided into a plenary and workshop session.

- Plenary session of 1-1.5 hour

During the plenary, the participants will be provided with inspiration, perspectives and ideas for how to work at the intersection between health and urban design, looking at how to support active lifestyles and health food behaviors through the urban environment. The intention is that this symposium will kick-start the spreading of ideas and concepts to guide practical actions in cities across the European region and steer the direction of future work of WHO/Europe in supporting Member States to develop active and healthy urban environments.

For this session, it is possible to register as an individual professional working in an area related to planning and designing healthy cities in the WHO European Region. There will be simultaneous translation into Russian.

- Workshops with invited city teams

For the workshop track of the program, invited cities will take part with a small delegation. These city delegations can consist of health professionals, food specialists, urban designers, city planners and local government officials from invited cities in the WHO European Region.

Each city delegation may include participants from the planning department, health department, sports and recreation or community development etc. The delegation can consist of a group of people already working together or a group of people that could benefit from taking part in the same event. Participation as a mixed delegation could help get the project or initiative going. Ideal size of group: 4-10 people.

Participants are encouraged to bring a project or strategy that they are planning to implement. During the symposium, this project or strategy can serve as a case for piloting new ideas. Depending on the nature of the project or strategy the participants can be managers on different levels. Some work in between the sessions is expected of the participants to advance ideas and test tools.

The workshops are only open to invited city teams working on specific projects. If you would like to participate in the workshop with a team from your city, please send expressions of interest with details of the proposed project and the potential participants from your city to [Stephen Whiting whitings@who.int](mailto:whitings@who.int) by 24 March 2021.

Agenda

Day 1: How can the built environment support a healthy life?

- Supportive urban environments for physical activity
- Foodscapes and the quality of the built environment
- Introduction to methods & tools
- City workshops, with input from experts

Day 2: Piloting ideas for actions

- Tactics on how to get it done
- Cross-departmental collaboration
- Action-oriented planning
- Insights into real challenges: sharing of cases from participating cities
- City workshops, with input from experts

Day 3: Bringing it all together

- City delegations share their ideas and progress
- Feedback and reactions from other participants