



## 1. What types of health issues are L.A. County residents facing today?

Residents are facing high rates of overweight and obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, emphysema, depression and asthma - which may be connected to their community's environment.

## 2. What are the different types of community environments?

- **Physical environment:** includes access to parks, trails, bike paths, sidewalks; distance of homes from businesses, schools, and public transportation; and air quality.
- **Social environment:** includes access to jobs and education, access to health food, community support services, affordable housing, healthcare, and community safety.

## 3. How can the environment affect one's health?

- Poor air quality (air pollution) can lead to asthma and other respiratory problems.
- Lack of good affordable grocery stores and increased numbers of liquor stores, convenience stores and fast food restaurants can lead to increased numbers of overweight and obesity.
- Poor community design and structure does not promote physical activity which can improve health.

## 4. What kinds of changes in the environment can a community make?

Residents can:

- Give input into updates to their city's General Plan;
- Help change zoning laws to increase the number of grocery stores, markets, and affordable housing options;
- Help improve and create more sidewalks and bike paths;
- Allow fewer liquor, fast food restaurants, and convenience stores.

## 5. How can communities make these changes?

### Residents can:

- Partner with city government officials to help change zoning laws and update land-use plans
- Participate in city-run meetings such as with the city council
- Create community organizations and coalitions to increase support for issues
- Apply for grants to fund neighborhood improvement projects
- Partner with local schools to make changes affecting local school children

The L.A. County Dept of Public Health can be contacted for more information and materials, and residents can write to their elected officials on issues they are concerned about.

### Sources

1. *Physical and Social Environment Speaker's Bureau presentation: Los Angeles and You – How you are affected by your environment and how your community can make it better, L.A. County Dept of Public Health*

For additional resources, please dial 2-1-1 or visit the L.A. County Department of Public Health website <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov>.