



London Olympics 2012: monitoring health threats

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ECDC is enhancing its surveillance activities for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. ECDC is watching ECDC for any infectious disease health events that could present a public health threat and as of Friday 20 July, a summary of relevant health events will be included in the weekly [Communicable Disease Threat Report \(CDTR\)](#), published on this [website](#).

Global mass gathering events can present challenges for public health because of their scale and the possible additional demands made of the public health services. To tackle these challenges, surveillance systems can be enhanced to target specific diseases or syndromes and to support timely response actions to reduce their impact and risk of spread.

ECDC is carrying out enhanced international event-based surveillance as part of its routine epidemic intelligence activities July to September. It has adapted media screening tools to assist detecting timely infectious disease threats which may be relevant for the Games, the host and participating countries. The use of social media and blog fora as a mechanism of timely identification of disease threats is being explored in this context.

ECDC is working together with the [Health Protection Agency \(HPA\)](#) in the UK and international partners such as the World Health Organisation to undertake epidemiological monitoring and intelligence of international health events. As part of this joint activity, ECDC will have a liaison officer at the HPA and persons from HPA will be seconded to ECDC during the Olympics. This close collaboration will permit comprehensive risk assessment and shared understanding of any potential international threats to both the Games and to the wider European community during this time. A daily bulletin containing information on events relevant from a public health perspective is being provided to EU Member States public health authorities.

A summary of relevant infectious disease threats is included in the [weekly CDTR](#), and is similar to the summary of threats monitored for EURO 2012.

Large gatherings of people raise the potential of public health risks from both communicable and non-communicable diseases. Based on experience from previous such mass gatherings, it is unlikely that infectious diseases – which is ECDC's mandated focus - will be a major problem at London 2012. On current information, there were no major public health problems at the recent EURO 2012 in Poland and Ukraine.

The greatest risk for visitors, when it comes to infectious diseases, is likely to be related to food and waterborne diseases, such as food poisoning due to inappropriately handled food items or inadequate hand hygiene practices.

The organisers of these mass gatherings have published public messages about how to stay healthy in order to best enjoy these events. Preventative measures that people can take themselves and can contribute to keeping others healthy include things such as: washing hands regularly, ensure relevant vaccinations are up to date (particularly for measles, mumps and rubella), [practice safe sex](#), apply sunscreen to avoid sunburn, drink plenty of water to keep hydrated and stay at home if you feel unwell.

Related links:

- [Weekly Communicable Disease Threat Report](#)
- [HPA ready for Olympics challenge](#)
- [HPA vaccination advice for national teams](#)
- [HPA advice for the public for London 2012](#)
- [London 2012 bulletin from HPA, WHO and ECDC](#)

