

# International Health Regulations (IHR)

The IHR (2005) is a legally binding agreement signed by 194 Member States that commits them to develop and maintain an ability to rapidly find, stop and prevent disease outbreaks along with other public health threats, and to report these events to the World Health Organization (WHO).

## What do the IHR require of countries?



**Core capabilities:** Countries must develop, strengthen and maintain core public health capabilities for the surveillance of and response to disease threats. These include tested contingency plans, trained and staffed rapid response teams, and appropriate infection control and case management procedures at health care facilities.



**Notification:** Countries must notify WHO within 24 hours of any events that may constitute a public health emergency of international concern. Once notified, WHO supports rapid investigation and response.



**Declaration of an international health emergency:** WHO may declare a global health emergency, provide recommendations for affected parties and coordinate a global response with relevant governments, the United Nations and other stakeholders.

## Benefits for Countries that Commit to IHR

### Health Threats are Stopped at the Border

The IHR strengthen countries' abilities to control diseases that cross borders at ports, airports and ground crossings.

### Safer Trade and Travel

The IHR promote trade and tourism in countries and prevent economic damage caused by disease outbreaks.

### Enhanced Global Health Security

The IHR establish an early warning system not only for diseases, but also for biological, radiological or chemical events that meet IHR criteria.

### Daily Threats Controlled

The IHR guide countries to detect, assess and respond to threats and inform other countries quickly.

### All Sectors Benefit

The IHR prepare all sectors for potential emergencies through coordination and information sharing.

## 2005 IHR Update:

- The IHR were founded in 1969 and were amended in the following decades.
- The 2003 SARS epidemic exposed the lack of global capacity for infectious disease detection, prevention and control.
- WHO and Member States adopted a revised IHR in 2005 to help countries develop this capacity and to better address acute public health risks that threaten people worldwide.

## Additional Resources

For additional information about the IHR, please visit the following sites:

- IHR (2005) Third Edition: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241580496>
- Ten things you need to do to implement the IHR: <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/emergencies-ten-things-you-need-to-do-to-implement-the-international-health-regulations>