Biomonitoring
Frequently Asked Questions

Question

How does biomonitoring fit with cancer risk factor research?

Answer

Identification of a cancer risk factor often follows a three-stage process. The stages are not necessarily completed in order. The first stage is identifying a potential health hazard. The middle stage is monitoring exposure (biomonitoring and/or environmental monitoring), and the final stage is surveillance to determine health effects.

At this point in time, the middle stage has advanced so rapidly that it may take years for the first and final stages to "catch up." The reports being released by the CDC show what levels of which chemicals are in human tissues. This data can show that an exposure is lower than average, baseline, or higher than average. It can't, and doesn't, however, provide information about health impacts linked to those chemicals and levels.

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