



University of California, San Francisco  
c/o California Poison Control System  
San Francisco Division, Box 1369  
San Francisco, CA 94143-1369

## The Community Environment

### Goals:

- Appreciate how features of the neighborhood and community impact children's health
  - Physical design
  - Access to health promoting resources
  - Social structure

### Introduction:

A comprehensive view of a child's life lends understanding of how a given risk affects a given child. An environmental health perspective helps the provider take this broad view as it allows exploration of the interplay between genetics, demographics, toxic exposures, positive influences, the built environment, chronic illness, maternal exposures, prior exposures, age, and behavior. These influences function at both the individual and community level. To appreciate the complex interplay of these influences at the community level, the pediatrician's best tool is her observation skills. These skills, honed in the clinic, can help a pediatrician begin to understand how the built environment impacts children's health.

### DIRECTIONS:

#### Preparation:

Before visiting the neighborhood, prepare by becoming familiar with key concepts in environmental health, key concepts of the built environment, and learn some of the characteristics of the neighborhood you will visit.

- 1) Environmental hazards as they relate to children.

Read: *Pediatric Environmental Health Toolkit: Key Concepts*

- 2) The Built Environment and Health:

Review: AAP Committee on Environmental Health: "Statement on The Built Environment." *Pediatrics* June 2009

- 3) Your instructor will provide you with a patient to be considered during this exercise.
- 4) Spend 20 minutes on Google and Google Maps familiarizing yourself with the chosen neighborhood. Use the worksheet to mark important places on your Google Map.
- 5) Familiarize yourself with online tools for neighborhood evaluation. Learn about the pollutants in the zip code you've been given and how your patient's neighborhood compares to others.

Scorecard [www.scorecard.org](http://www.scorecard.org): A pollution information website. It provides pollution reports by county including toxics, air, water, and environmental justice.

EPA EnviroMapper Storefront <http://www.epa.gov/enviro/html/em/index.html>: Interactive mapping tools for querying environmental information by zip code. It includes an environmental justice database.

Air Quality Index: [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov) Check the local Air Quality Index and forecasts for air quality in your patient's zip code.

If you want to learn more about pollutants in the neighborhood:  
ATSDR ToxFAQs <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq.html>: Frequently asked questions about contaminants found at hazardous waste sites.

### **Neighborhood visit:**

- 1) Visit your patient's neighborhood. Look for neighborhood features that impact children's health. Use the worksheet to guide your thinking as you walk.
- 2) Consider the relationship between your patient's health and the greater community.



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WORKSHEET for use while reviewing online tools:  
 Name or location of the community or neighborhood: \_\_\_\_\_

**Environmental Hazards:**

Environmental measure	Details/Toxin released	Name and addresses of schools/children's areas near pollution sources
EPA Superfund sites nearby		
Pollution sources nearby		
Air Quality		
Water Quality		

**Places:**

While online, note important places in your patient's neighborhood.  
 Mark your printed google map with features that aren't already marked.

Educational center: daycare, school (Mark S)
Recreation centers: Gym, Park, Field (Mark R)
Transit: Parking lots, bus lines, freeways, trains and switching yards, mass transit, ports
Local Industrial Centers: factories, cement kilns, refineries (Mark I)
Waterways: Creeks, rivers

**Notes:**

## THE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

### **WORKSHEET for use while on the walk:**

As you walk through the neighborhood, note the following. If appropriate, mark location on your google map.

Community centers, community action groups (Mark C)
Nutritional access: Grocery store, liquor store (Mark G or L)
Safety: graffiti, security on homes, sense of safety, crime, pedestrian safety
Neighborhood Maintenance: Upkeep of homes, paint, sidewalks, windows
Aesthetics: cleanliness, art and culture evident
Walking or cycling facilities: sidewalks, bike lanes, designated parking areas for bikes

### **Notes and Ideas:**

As you walk, consider how the built environment relates to your patient's health. Brainstorm with your group for ideas of patient, neighborhood, local, and state level efforts that could improve your patient's health.



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