



## » WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Humans have altered and will continue to alter their environment, while remaining dependent upon marine ecosystems as resources of food, water and materials. Human populations are both moving to, and growing in coastal areas globally. Consequently, there is an increased reliance on, and use of, these coastal resources, ranging from fishing and aquaculture activities to desalination for drinking water and recreational use of beaches and coastal areas.

Increasing our knowledge of the connections between human health and the ocean has many public health applications, ultimately allowing us to:

- improve our understanding of the potential public health benefits from marine and coastal ecosystems;
- reduce the burden of human disease linked with marine environmental causes; and
- anticipate new threats to public health before they become serious.

## » WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT HUMAN HEALTH AND THE OCEAN?

There is increasing recognition that the health of the ocean is inextricably linked to human health and wellbeing in a number of ways. In other words, the marine environment impacts human health. These impacts are a complex mixture of negative influences (e.g. from extreme weather events such as cyclones to water-borne illnesses and pollution) and beneficial factors (e.g. from natural products including seafood to marine renewable energy and wellbeing from interactions with coastal environments).

Humans also impact the ocean in a number of ways. Through our activities, including pollution and overfishing, as well as global climate change, we are directly and indirectly affecting the health of the ocean. This in turn has significant implications for human health, particularly if future potential medicines from the seas, as well as important sources of protein in seafood, are lost due to contamination as a result of human activity and the effects of climate change.

Considering these factors together, the study of human health and the ocean is the study of all the ways in which the ocean influences our health and wellbeing, and in turn, how we influence the health of the ocean.

## » WHAT ARE THESE FACTSHEETS FOR?

With these factsheets, we want to communicate the idea that the marine environment, its structure and processes have a major bearing on current and future human health and wellbeing, and public health more broadly. We also want to spread the message that we all share the responsibility of looking after the ocean and it is in our own interests to do so. By taking small actions and changing our habits we can make a big difference.

With this in mind, each of these 5 factsheets explores a different topic and explains how human health and the ocean are connected. In addition, each factsheet suggests 'ocean-friendly' actions that you can take.

We now have an opportunity to mitigate and prevent further destruction of the ocean environment, and in turn, protect the health of current and future generations of humans and other organisms.

## Key Information Sources and Further Reading

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[WWW.SEACHANGEPROJECT.EU](http://WWW.SEACHANGEPROJECT.EU)

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