

WHO report: Much disease preventable

June 17 2006

A World Health Organization report blames almost one-quarter of disease around the world on environmental factors.

The percentage is believed to be higher for children, as much as 33 percent.

"The report issued today is a major contribution to ongoing efforts to better define the links between environment and health," said Dr. Anders Nordström, the agency's acting director general. "We have always known that the environment influences health very profoundly, but these estimates are the best to date."

Dr. Maria Neira, director of the department of public health and the environment, said the report provides a "hit list" of environmental problems.

The report said 94 percent of cases of diarrhea globally are caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation and hygiene. It blames 41 percent of lower respiratory infections on air pollution indoors and out.

Malaria is possibly the biggest killer in history. The report suggests 42 percent of cases could be prevented with better housing design and water supply.

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Citation: WHO report: Much disease preventable (2006, June 17) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2006-06-disease.html>

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