



Aliso Canyon Disaster Health Research Study

What is a Health Study?

In 2020, the LA County Department of Public Health will be launching the Aliso Canyon Disaster Health Research Study. A health study has the potential to answer important questions a community may have about how public health is impacted by environmental health hazards or exposures. In the case of Aliso Canyon, many would like to know whether or not the SoCalGas blowout has caused an increase in disease and illness in the community. Under the guidance of a Scientific Oversight Committee and with input from a Community Advisory Group, we will begin identifying key questions about the effects of the disaster and conducting research to find the answers.

But what exactly is a health study, and what can it accomplish? Specifically, it is a scientific inquiry designed to address a specific research objective related to health. It is a rigorous, systematic and objective process of exploration and measurement. Health studies are designed to answer questions and can measure the relationship between specific exposures and disease:

For example, research questions may ask:

- Are illnesses in the Aliso Canyon community being caused by chemicals emanating from the SoCalGas facility?
- Was exposure "x" associated with an increased risk of disease "y" in population "z" during time period "zz"?

Exposure "x"
(e.g. chemical odors,
radiation)



Disease "y"
(e.g. cancer, asthma,
heart disease)

What does a health study do?

- A Health Study can help determine whether or not specific exposures are connected to specific disease or illness.
- It studies how exposures can ultimately lead to illness.
- It studies measurements of disease within the population.
- It identifies groups that may be at increased risk of illness from specific exposures.

What can a health study not do?

- It cannot make individual diagnoses.
- It is not a channel to receive medical treatment.
- It cannot definitively confirm that an individual's illness is due to a certain exposure.
- It is not a clinical trial in which researchers study the effects of treatment on a disease.



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What is a Health Study?

What can different health studies look like?

- It can study a population over a period of time or at one specific point of time.
- It can study acute or chronic health effects.
- It can study past effects or study continuing effects.
- Investigators can collect their own data or use already present data sets.
- It can involve direct measurement, or it may need modeling to perform an experiment that cannot be carried out in the real world.
- It can involve study participants or only use population data.

What are some of the challenges a health study may have in identifying relationships between exposure and disease?

- Difficult to quantify the size of exposure
- Lengthy time period between the initial exposure and incidences of the disease
- Populations change as people move in and out of the community
- Competing health risks which may contribute to incidences of disease

What are some of the benefits of a health study?

- It can provide valuable information identifying relationships between exposure and disease
- It can serve as a tool to educate people about environmental health concerns
- It creates opportunity for community members to get involved
- It can help protect public health for future generations

For the Aliso Canyon Health Research Study, a Scientific Oversight Committee will lend its expertise to provide guidance on the Study's focus and priorities. Once researchers are selected for the Health Study, a key first step will be identifying the specific research questions that will be asked. For more information on health studies, please visit [link](#).