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## Ionizing radiation

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## International Project on Health Effects of the Chernobyl Accident

The largest-ever radiation accident involving a nuclear reactor occurred on 26 April 1986 at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine. Radioactive contamination spread over large areas of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

The Chernobyl accident led to fatality of 30 workers at the reactor site, caused the hospitalization of two hundreds of others and exposed 6.7 million people to ionizing radiation caused by fallout of radioactive aerosols. This has led to a ten-fold increase in thyroid cancer among children in affected areas.

The WHO's International Programme on the Health Effects of the Chernobyl Accident (IPHECA) was established to support national programmes, monitor health consequences and indicate future work needed to ensure that maximum information is gained from this disaster.

Building on the results of IPHECA, the International Thyroid Project (ITP) and a series of the International Agency on Research on Cancer (IARC) pilot projects aimed at evaluating the feasibility of different approaches for the epidemiological monitoring of exposed population, WHO continues and further develops its activities in the follow-up of the Chernobyl accident, integrating the activities and expertise of its various offices and specialized agencies. Priority areas have been identified in collaboration with the three affected States. The priority areas are currently as follows:

- Maintenance of the thyroid tissue and DNA data banks for early diagnosis and verification of thyroid diseases, and for the study of radiation cancer.
- Risk assessment of exposure to low dose and low dose rate radiation
- Medical relief to children affected by the Chernobyl accident through their development and implementation of health telematics.

To order 'Health consequences of the Chernobyl accident. Results of the IPHECA pilot projects and related national programmes. Summary Report (WHO, Geneva, 1995), contact: [Mme Bravard](#)

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