Epidemiology
Definition and Natural History
Epidemiology is the study of how disease is distributed in populations and factors that influence or determine this distribution.

Epidemiology is the study of the distribution and determinants of health related states or events in specified populations and application the this study to control of health problems.
Objectives of Epidemiology:
First. To identify the etiology or cause of a disease and the relevant risk factors i.e. factors that increase a person’s risk for a disease
Second. To determine the extent of disease found in the community
Third. To study the natural history and prognosis of disease
Fourth. To evaluate both existing and newly developed preventive and therapeutic measures and modes of health care delivery.
Fifth. To provide the foundation for developing public policy relating to environmental problems, genetic issues, and other considerations regarding disease prevention and health promotion.
![Chart showing death rates per 100,000 from various causes in 1900 and 2004. The top causes of death in 1900 were Pneumonia (all forms) and influenza, Tuberculosis, and Diarrhea and enteritis. In 2004, Heart disease was the leading cause of death, followed by Cancer. Other significant causes in 2004 included Chronic lower respiratory diseases, Accidents (unintentional injury), Diabetes mellitus, Alzheimer's disease, Influenza and pneumonia, Kidney disease, and Septicemia.](image)

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FIGURE 1. Infant mortality rate,* by year — United States, 1915–1997

*Per 1000 live births.
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