

National Environmental Health Tracking Network

Application Programming Interface (API)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1) Who should use the Tracking API?

Anyone who wants to access environmental and health data from CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Network in machine-readable format.

2) What is an API token?

An API token is a unique identifier given to a registered user who requests access to environmental public health tracking data through the API. An example of a token is "C6016D98-CGCA-495D-BF0B-EAAE20BADD98" (not a valid token). Users are not required to register for an API token, but it is recommended.

3) Why register for an API token?

Users are not required to register for an API token, but it is recommended. Registering for an API token speeds up your data feed rate. You have the option to contact us for additional reductions in limitations on a case-by-case basis.

Without a token, you still have access to the same types of data as a registered user; however, the data feed will be much slower.

4) How do I register for an API token?

You may request a token for the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network API by contacting trackingsupport@cdc.gov. A token will be emailed to you within 2-3 business days.

5) What data can I access with the API?

The API allows access to the entire repository of Environmental Public Health Tracking data that is currently available via the Tracking Network's [Data Explorer](#).

6) Can I download an entire dataset, such as all Air Quality- Modeled and Monitor, using the API?

No. The Tracking Network's database system is set up to query data at the measure level, so you cannot request an entire content area (which consist of multiple measures). However, you can request a complete data set by contacting nephtrackingsupport@cdc.gov.

7) Why are some locations missing?

Because of limitations related to data availability, some datasets do not include all locations or may not include all years for a given location.

8) How often are the data updated?

The Environmental Public Health Tracking Network updates different datasets as new data become available. The update time varies among the different datasets, but it is usually once per year. There can be a lag time between when datasets are updated and when the updated datasets are displayed on the Tracking Network. This is because it takes data owners time to collect, analyze, and prepare their data for release.

9) Is there a way to have your data query interface generate example API calls for me?

Yes! You can use the Tracking Network's [Data Explorer](#) to develop your query. After your data are fetched, click on the share icon just above the results window. A dialog box will pop up with the exact API call for your data query.

10) Do I have to pay to use the API?

No, the API is free.

11) How do I find out what data are available through the API?

The [online documentation](#) lists the health and environmental data (measures) and available parameters. All data available on the [Data Explorer](#) are also available through the API.

12) Are there restrictions on how often I can query the API?

Yes. Sequential queries are limited when you do not provide an API token. However, if you register for your own API token, the query limitations are lowered significantly and you have the option to contact us about further reductions in limitations on a per token basis.

13) Are there restrictions on how much data I can pull from your API?

No. You are not restricted to the quantity of data retrieved from an API call. You are only restricted on how often you request the data.

14) Is there training I can take to learn how to use the Tracking Network API?

No, but you can find a detailed User Guide with numerous usage examples on the [Tracking API Help](#) page.

15) How do you use my information when I register for a token?

Information from API token users is used only to monitor data use and server performance as well as help support API users better if technical issues arise.

16) How do I start working with the API?

The best place to start is the [Tracking API User Guide](#). The User Guide contains detailed information on using the API along with helpful examples of API calls. Additionally, you can use the Tracking Network's [Data Explorer](#) to develop your query. After your data are fetched, click on the share icon just above the results window. A dialog box will pop up with the exact API call for your data query. This is a great way to familiarize yourself with how the API works.

17) Can I save the results to an Excel spreadsheet?

No. You will need to transform the API's JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) output to CSV for importing into Excel.

18) I want to get data on multiple measures. Do I have to perform multiple calls to the API or is it possible for the API to return data in a combined JSON file?

You can get data on only one measure per API call; however, you can request multiple time periods and multiple geographies for that measure. The Tracking API will return one JSON file per call to the API. If you want to combine JSON files, you will need to create code to manually merge them.

19) Can I make changes to the API for a different result?

No. The API returns a defined JSON output that is documented in our [API Help Page](#).

20) What is JSON?

JSON (JavaScript Object Notation) is a lightweight data-interchange format which can be used to transmit data from server to application.

21) My question is not listed here. Who do I contact?

Please contact trackingsupport@cdc.gov with any questions.