

Epidemiology Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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Table of Contents

Copyright	1
Table of Contents	2
Introduction	3
How to Use This Guide	4
Questions	5
Answers	8
Explanations	10
Next Steps	16

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Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

- Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,
- Improve accuracy and speed,
- Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and
- Approach the exam with greater confidence.

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

Remember: successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here's how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:

1. Start with a Diagnostic Review

Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.

2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions

Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 - 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.

3. Learn from the Explanations

After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.

4. Track Your Progress

Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.

5. Simulate the Real Exam

Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.

6. Repeat and Review

Don't just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.

There's no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!

Questions

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1. Which formula represents the secondary attack rate?
 - A. (# of people exposed to a primary case who develop illness) / (Total # people susceptible after first wave)
 - B. (# of people exposed to a primary case who develop illness) / (Total population)
 - C. (# of people exposed to a primary case who develop illness) / (Total # people who were exposed)
 - D. (# of secondary cases) / (Total population)

2. Which statement best describes the kappa statistic?
 - A. The observed agreement.
 - B. The proportion of positive results among all observations.
 - C. It evaluates how much better than random chance the observed agreement is, adjusting for expected agreement.
 - D. It is the same as the expected agreement.

3. Which statement about data from special clinics/hospitals is accurate?
 - A. They collect standardized data across all patients
 - B. They represent a random sample of the population
 - C. They include universal data for nationwide surveillance
 - D. They are not easily generalizable to the reference population (except Mayo Clinic)

4. Which of the following is a true advantage of disease registries?
 - A. They provide a centralized database for study incidence and case-control selection.
 - B. They always capture all cases regardless of funding.
 - C. They are inexpensive and bias-free.
 - D. They require no funding or staffing.

5. What best describes the gold standard in disease status assessment?
 - A. A test with imperfect accuracy.
 - B. A screening tool used for population screening.
 - C. An external source of truth regarding the disease status of each person.
 - D. A test considered the gold standard because it is inexpensive.

- 6. Francis Bacon contributed to which methodological concept?**
- A. Deductive reasoning and theory-driven hypotheses**
 - B. Observational data not used in medicine**
 - C. Experimental trials in sailors**
 - D. Inductive logic leading to law of mortality and law of epidemics**
- 7. Indirect adjustment is characterized by which statement?**
- A. It applies observed standard rates to the study population to compute expected deaths.**
 - B. It compares the study population's rates to a standard population and uses the study group's base population.**
 - C. It uses a completely outside standard population to compute adjusted rates.**
 - D. It requires detailed age-specific rates for all age groups.**
- 8. Which term describes a disease that is consistently present in a population at a relatively stable level over time?**
- A. Epidemic**
 - B. Pandemic**
 - C. Endemic**
 - D. Carrier Status**
- 9. Which statement about rates is correct?**
- A. A plain ratio without time**
 - B. Proportion is always used**
 - C. The number of cases in question end**
 - D. A ratio with a distinct relationship between numerator and denominator and a measure of time is an intrinsic part of the denominator**
- 10. Who used observational data in developing the concept of vaccination?**
- A. James Lind**
 - B. Pierre Louis**
 - C. John Snow**
 - D. Edward Jenner**

Answers

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1. A
2. C
3. D
4. A
5. C
6. D
7. B
8. C
9. D
10. D

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Explanations

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1. Which formula represents the secondary attack rate?

- A. (# of people exposed to a primary case who develop illness) / (Total # people susceptible after first wave)**
- B. (# of people exposed to a primary case who develop illness) / (Total population)**
- C. (# of people exposed to a primary case who develop illness) / (Total # people who were exposed)**
- D. (# of secondary cases) / (Total population)**

Secondary attack rate measures the risk to people who were actually exposed to a primary case, among those who are susceptible. It is calculated as the number of secondary cases among exposed contacts divided by the total number of susceptible contacts (those who were at risk after the first case). This matches the idea of counting how many of the people who could be infected after exposure became ill, out of everyone who was susceptible and exposed. The other options either use the whole population or all exposed people (including those not susceptible), which does not reflect the risk among those at risk after exposure.

2. Which statement best describes the kappa statistic?

- A. The observed agreement.**
- B. The proportion of positive results among all observations.**
- C. It evaluates how much better than random chance the observed agreement is, adjusting for expected agreement.**
- D. It is the same as the expected agreement.**

Kappa measures agreement between two raters that goes beyond what would be expected by chance, taking into account how often each rater tends to assign each category. It uses the observed agreement (how often the raters actually agree) and the expected agreement (how often they would agree just by luck given their individual rating patterns), and combines them in the formula $\text{kappa} = (P_o - P_e) / (1 - P_e)$. This means it tells you how much better than random chance the observed agreement is, relative to the maximum possible agreement beyond chance. If there is no agreement beyond chance, kappa is zero; if there is perfect agreement beyond chance, kappa is one; if agreement is worse than chance, kappa can be negative. So the statement that best describes the kappa statistic is that it evaluates how much better than random chance the observed agreement is, adjusting for expected agreement. The other ideas—just the observed agreement, the proportion of positives, or the expected agreement itself—don't capture this chance-adjusted measure.

3. Which statement about data from special clinics/hospitals is accurate?

- A. They collect standardized data across all patients**
- B. They represent a random sample of the population**
- C. They include universal data for nationwide surveillance**
- D. They are not easily generalizable to the reference population (except Mayo Clinic)**

The main idea this item tests is that data collected from special clinics or hospitals come from a selective group of people who seek care there, so they don't represent the general population. This creates selection bias: patients seen at a specialty clinic are often different from the broader community—perhaps they have more severe disease, specific risk factors, or better access to care, and they may come from particular geographic or socioeconomic groups. Because of this, estimates derived from clinic data (like how common a condition is or how risk factors relate to outcomes) don't easily generalize to the reference population. These data are usually not collected as a random sample of everyone, and the setting can influence which patients are captured, making nationwide surveillance or broad population inferences unreliable without additional adjustment or population-based data. However, Mayo Clinic is noted as an exception because its multi-site, large-scale, standardized data collection across diverse populations can enhance generalizability relative to a single, local clinic. Still, even there, caution is needed before assuming the data perfectly reflect the general population.

4. Which of the following is a true advantage of disease registries?

- A. They provide a centralized database for study incidence and case-control selection.**
- B. They always capture all cases regardless of funding.**
- C. They are inexpensive and bias-free.**
- D. They require no funding or staffing.**

Disease registries centralize information about a specific condition into one organized dataset. This makes it much easier to measure incidence in a defined population over time and to identify a clear pool of cases for research. By standardizing how cases are defined and data are collected, registries provide reliable, comparable data across sites and periods. They also offer a ready source for selecting controls from the same population, which improves the efficiency and validity of case-control studies because the cases and controls come from the same defined source population. While registries do require ongoing funding and quality checks, their ability to provide a centralized, well-defined set of cases and incidence data is a major advantage.

5. What best describes the gold standard in disease status assessment?

- A. A test with imperfect accuracy.**
- B. A screening tool used for population screening.**
- C. An external source of truth regarding the disease status of each person.**
- D. A test considered the gold standard because it is inexpensive.**

The external source of truth about whether a person truly has the disease. This reference standard provides the definitive classification of disease status, used to judge how well other tests perform. It should be independent of the test under evaluation so we can accurately measure sensitivity and specificity. It isn't a screening tool for population-wide detection, and its value isn't about being inexpensive. In practice, the gold standard is the best available method to determine true disease status—such as histopathology, culture, or definitive clinical follow-up—though sometimes no perfect standard exists and researchers use alternative reference standards.

6. Francis Bacon contributed to which methodological concept?

- A. Deductive reasoning and theory-driven hypotheses**
- B. Observational data not used in medicine**
- C. Experimental trials in sailors**
- D. Inductive logic leading to law of mortality and law of epidemics**

Francis Bacon's approach centers on learning by careful observation and building knowledge through induction. He argued that scientists should collect extensive data from the natural world, organize it, and derive broad generalizations from those observations rather than starting with a theory and fitting the data to it. In epidemiology, this means examining patterns in mortality and the spread of epidemics across populations, then formulating general laws about how mortality varies and how epidemics unfold—laws that can be tested and refined with more data. This inductive path to general principles is exactly what is described by inductive logic leading to laws about mortality and epidemics.

7. Indirect adjustment is characterized by which statement?
- A. It applies observed standard rates to the study population to compute expected deaths.
 - B. It compares the study population's rates to a standard population and uses the study group's base population.**
 - C. It uses a completely outside standard population to compute adjusted rates.
 - D. It requires detailed age-specific rates for all age groups.

Indirect adjustment centers on using rates from a standard population and applying them to the study population's own age distribution to estimate what would be expected. This means you compare the observed outcomes in the study group to the numbers you'd expect if the study group had the standard rates, weighting by the study group's population structure. The key point is that you don't need the study population's own detailed age-specific rates; you rely on the standard rates and the study population's base distribution to compute expected counts and then compare observed to expected (often via the SMR). That aligns with the idea of applying external rates to the study group's age distribution, which is captured by the statement.

8. Which term describes a disease that is consistently present in a population at a relatively stable level over time?
- A. Epidemic
 - B. Pandemic
 - C. Endemic**
 - D. Carrier Status

Endemic describes a disease that is consistently present in a population at a relatively stable level over time. This means there's a predictable baseline of cases in a given area, even though the numbers can vary with seasons or other factors. It's different from an epidemic, where cases spike above the usual level in a given time period, and from a pandemic, which is an epidemic that spreads across many countries or continents. Carrier status refers to individuals who harbor and can transmit the pathogen without showing symptoms, which isn't about the overall baseline level of disease in a population.

9. Which statement about rates is correct?

- A. A plain ratio without time
- B. Proportion is always used
- C. The number of cases in question end
- D. A ratio with a distinct relationship between numerator and denominator and a measure of time is an intrinsic part of the denominator**

Rates are frequencies that measure how often something happens in a defined amount of time, so time must be part of the denominator. That means you're looking at a defined relationship between the number of events (the numerator) and the time at risk (the denominator), such as cases per person-time. This is what makes a rate different from a plain ratio or a simple count: the time dimension is essential. The best statement captures this by describing a ratio in which the numerator and denominator are linked by a defined relationship and includes a time measure in the denominator, for example events per person-time. A plain ratio without time isn't a rate, since it lacks the time component. Proportions aren't rates either because they don't incorporate time in the denominator. And a description that treats the count alone or without a time basis doesn't reflect the per-time relationship that defines a rate.

10. Who used observational data in developing the concept of vaccination?

- A. James Lind
- B. Pierre Louis
- C. John Snow
- D. Edward Jenner**

Observational evidence of natural immunity sparked the idea of vaccination. Edward Jenner noticed that dairy workers who contracted cowpox seemed protected from smallpox. This pattern suggested that a prior, milder infection could confer immunity to a more dangerous one. Jenner then tested the idea by deliberately introducing cowpox material to a healthy child and later showing protection when exposed to smallpox. This use of real-world observations to infer a protective effect, followed by a deliberate test of that inference, is what established the vaccination concept. Other figures contributed important methods in medical history, but Jenner is the one whose work directly linked a naturally occurring, milder infection to protection against a more dangerous disease, giving birth to vaccination.

Next Steps

Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.

As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.

If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at hello@examzify.com.

Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:

<https://epidemiology.examzify.com>

We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!

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