

# Climate Change and Your Health



## What Is Climate Change?

There is clear proof that the world's climate is changing. These changes will affect the usual, expected weather patterns. They are caused by human activities, like operating factories, driving vehicles, and pollution. Climate change could have a serious effect on the health of the public. It can cause:

- Swings in temperature causing more heat waves and storms
- Higher sea levels
- Extreme weather events, such as droughts, floods, wildfires, and hurricanes
- Poor air quality, because of higher rates of pollution and dust
- Changes in food or clean water supply



## How Can Climate Change Affect My Health?

All people will be affected by climate change, but children and older adults may be most affected. Climate change will be linked with health problems, such as:

- **Heat-related conditions:** Extreme heat can cause dangerous changes in your body. This can lead to dehydration, heat stroke, and exhaustion. Extreme heat can make many health conditions worse, such as heart and lung diseases.
- **Breathing problems:** Air pollution is dangerous and can irritate your lungs. It can also make problems, such as asthma and COPD worse.
- **Unsafe water supply:** Floods can cause problems with your town's water supply. For example, a flood could cause sewer systems to overflow into drinking water. This could lead to problems, such as diarrheal disease and cholera.
- **Disease spread by insects:** Weather changes can cause there to be more disease-spreading insects. These insects, such as mosquitos and ticks, can spread such diseases as Zika virus, malaria, and dengue fever.
- **Less food and water:** Climate change can cause problems with food supply. Crops can be damaged and seafood supply may become scarce. Droughts also affect the supply of water for drinking and bathing.
- **Mental health problems:** Extreme weather events like flooding, hurricanes, and heat waves can affect your family's emotional well-being. These events can cause stress, which could lead to such problems as anxiety or depression.

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## How Can I Protect Myself and My Loved Ones?

- Prepare for extreme weather events. Visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) for advice. If you have a health condition, be sure you have enough of your medicine before a weather event.
- Protect yourself from insect bites by wearing insect repellent. Wear long sleeves, pants, and socks when outside.
- During a heat wave, wear loose clothing, drink lots of water, and stay out of the sun. Check on children and older family members often to make sure they are safe.
- Check the air quality in your area by visiting [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov). Limit outdoor activities during poor air quality days.
- Wash your fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating. This helps to remove bacteria, pesticides, and other bugs that could cause illness.
- Talk with your health care professional about any concerns you may have.



## What Can I Do to Help?

- Carpool, bike, walk, or take public transportation to get to places you need to go. If you must drive, keep your car in good condition. Things like inflated tires and new air filters save fuel.
- Reduce your food waste and try to eat less meat.
- Buy appliances with the Energy Star label. Find more information at [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov).
- Unplug electronics when you are not using them.
- Install energy-efficient LED light bulbs.
- Insulate your home and windows to cut down on heat and air-conditioning use.
- For more tips, visit [www3.epa.gov/climatechange/wycd/](http://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/wycd/).

### For More Information

- **The Centers for Disease Control:** [www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/](http://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/)
- **Environmental Protection Agency:** [www3.epa.gov/climatechange/basics/](http://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/basics/)
- **The National Resource Defense Council:** [www.nrdc.org/resources/climate-change-threatens-health](http://www.nrdc.org/resources/climate-change-threatens-health)

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