

Major Health Impacts of Climate Change

Climate change can be detrimental in several different areas of health. People with preexisting conditions, the elderly, and infants are often at highest risk for these impacts.

Diseases

Increasing temperatures due to climate change can lead to serious diseases.

- Food and Waterborne diseases -- Instances of diarrheal diseases from contaminated food, drinking water, and swimming water increase when temperatures rise.
- Vector-borne disease -- Higher year-round temperatures lead to increased cases of diseases spread by bugs such as mosquitos, fleas, and ticks.

Respiratory Hazards

Breathing unclean air can do serious damage.

- Air Pollution -- Particulate matter (airborne particles such as dust and smoke) and ground-level gases (especially ozone gas) can lead to reactions among individuals with asthma and other respiratory conditions
- Allergens -- Increased temperatures lead to a longer allergy season and higher pollen counts throughout the allergy season.

Nutrition

Climate change's impact on the production of food can have several health consequences.

- Food insecurity -- Crops experience decreased yields due to extreme weather and pests. This leads to higher costs for these necessary, healthy foods.
- Decreased nutrients -- Increased carbon dioxide concentrations in soil lead to nutrient depletion in the crops grown.

Extreme Weather

Climate change has led to increased incidents of extreme weather.

- Heat related illness -- Heat waves directly cause heat stroke but can also exacerbate existing conditions and contribute to worsened illness or even death. The elderly are at the highest risk for death due to heat related illness.
- Fires -- Hot weather and drought lead to wildfires that can go on for days or even weeks. Apart from deaths, burns, and smoke inhalation caused by wildfires directly, the smoke from large fires can spread for miles and lead to respiratory and cardiovascular illness.
- Flooding -- Waterborne disease outbreaks, mold, and pneumonia can all occur in the aftermath of severe flooding, especially in individuals with respiratory conditions.
- Drought -- Drought can lead to dust storms, wildfires, and deteriorated air quality.

Mental Health

- Depression and Anxiety -- The stress and trauma of climate change events can have long-lasting effects on the mental health of those who experience them.

Source

CDC Climate Change and Public Health:

<https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/default.htm>