

CLIMATE CHANGE AND YOUR HEALTH

EXTREME HEAT



CLIMATE CHANGE IS AFFECTING YOUR HEALTH



Climate change is affecting your health.

Humans need clean air and water, nutritious food, safe shelter, and caring communities in order to thrive. Climate change is affecting these building blocks of healthy life. Climate change increases air and water pollution, disrupts food production, and leads to more extreme weather events, all of which can harm human health. People are making more visits to their clinics and hospitals due to climate change impacts.

Climate change has led to more frequent and severe heat waves, which are already affecting health across the country. Extreme heat leads to illnesses such as dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Air pollution is also worse on high heat days.

WHAT IS CAUSING EXTREME HEAT?

When dirty fuels like coal, oil, and gas (fossil fuels) are burned to produce energy to power our cars, homes, and buildings, they release carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. When greenhouse gases build up in the atmosphere, they cause the earth's temperature to rise, similar to a blanket trapping heat.

By reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the dangers of extreme heat today and in the future can be lessened. Homes, public buildings, and outdoor spaces can also be designed to stay cooler, helping people and communities adapt to the rising temperatures.

WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

The elderly, infants and young children, and pregnant women are at higher risk for problems from heat exposure.



Other at-risk groups include:

- People without air conditioning
- People with existing health problems like heart, lung, and kidney disease, diabetes, and mental health issues
- Outdoor workers and athletes who train and compete outside
- People on medications that make them more sensitive to heat

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

BEFORE A HOT DAY



- Monitor local weather news for periods of extreme heat. Be sure to look at the heat index, which measures how hot it feels based on temperature and humidity levels. Check out the **OSHA Heat Safety Tool** app for real-time heat index and hourly forecasts.
- Check on your friends and neighbors to make sure they are **prepared**.
- If you do not have air conditioning, identify **public cooling spaces in your community**. Check with your local government, city health department, or your local news for public cooling centers such as hospitals, libraries, schools, shopping malls, or community centers.

ON A HOT DAY

- **Do not spend long periods of time outside.** If you must be outside, go out in the morning or the evening, take breaks, and stay out of direct sunlight.
- Stay **hydrated** by drinking plenty of water and avoiding sugary or alcoholic beverages.
- If you feel dizzy, weak, nauseous, or faint, **seek medical advice**. These could be symptoms of a serious medical condition.



AFTER A HOT DAY



- Join **local efforts** to reduce climate pollution and vote for elected leaders that support transitioning to 100% clean energy.
- Ask your town to plant trees and provide **more green spaces** to cool your community.
- Try biking or walking places instead of driving to **reduce your carbon emissions**.
- Learn about how to make your home more **energy efficient**.

Visit [noharm.org/keepingcool](https://www.noharm.org/keepingcool) for additional information and resources.

TRUE OR FALSE?

Heat is the No. 1 cause of weather-related deaths in the United States.

TRUE FALSE



On average, heat is the leading cause of weather-related deaths in the U.S. The good news is almost all heat-related illnesses are preventable.

Extreme heat is only a problem in certain parts of the United States.

TRUE FALSE



Temperatures are rising in all parts of the United States and if we do not act to slow climate change, most of the country will see 20 to 30 more days a year with temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

Extreme heat could cause me to miss work and hurt the economy.

TRUE FALSE



Extreme heat has contributed to the loss of approximately 1.1 billion labor hours in the U.S. between 2000 and 2017 and especially threatens the health of outdoor workers.

Athletes are stronger and healthier than most Americans and are less affected by extreme heat.

TRUE FALSE



When the temperature and humidity are high, sweat does not evaporate from the skin so the body is unable to cool down. Athletes who train and compete outside are at high risk for heat-related illnesses.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER:

How should I prepare for extreme heat in our region?

Do I have any risk factors that could make hot days worse for me?

What should I do if I start feeling ill on a hot day?

