

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

How will climate change affect my health?



Below are examples of how climate change can affect your health at different stages of your life.

Life Stages

PREGNANT WOMEN who experience extreme weather, like floods and heatwaves, can experience mental health effects, injuries, and other health risks that affect their pregnancies and newborn infants.

INFANTS AND TODDLERS have developing immune systems that make them sensitive to heat, allergens, diseases carried by ticks and mosquitoes, and food and water-related illness.

CHILDREN are sensitive to heat, poor air quality, water and food related illnesses. They are often exposed to mosquitoes and ticks during outdoor play.

ADOLESCENTS can suffer heat-related illness, asthma or allergies while playing outdoors or competing in sports.

ADULTS who work in active or outdoor jobs have increased exposure to heat, allergens, poor air quality, and ticks or mosquitoes. They may have greater sensitivity to heat stress if taking certain medications.

OLDER ADULTS are sensitive to heat because they are less able to regulate body temperatures. They are less able to respond to extreme weather due to normal aging processes that affect physical or mental ability.

Stressors

RISING TEMPERATURES: Increasing temperatures mean heat waves are more frequent, more intense, and last longer.

- **Health risks:** dehydration, heat stroke, worsened heart and lung disease, death

REDUCED AIR QUALITY: Rising temperatures, changes in rain patterns, and increasing wildfires lead to more smog, plant allergens, and other air pollutants.

- **Health risks:** increased episodes of asthma and chronic lung disease, heart disease, death.

INCREASING EXTREME WEATHER: Hurricanes, severe storms, flooding, droughts, and wildfires are already increasing in frequency, intensity, or length.

- **Health risks:** water and food-related illnesses, respiratory illness, injuries, mental health problems.

Read more in the *Impacts Of Climate Change On Human Health In The United States: A Scientific Assessment* at <https://health2016.globalchange.gov>.

SPREADING DISEASES FROM MOSQUITOES AND TICKS: Changes in temperatures and precipitation patterns affect when and where diseases carried by mosquitoes and ticks occur.

- **Health risks:** Lyme disease, West Nile virus.

EXPANDING WATER-RELATED ILLNESS: Increasing water and air temperatures, heavy rainfall, flooding, and sea level rise can expose people to contaminated waters.

- **Health risks:** diarrhea, skin and eye infections.

DECREASED FOOD SAFETY: Increasing air and water temperatures and extreme weather lead to food contamination, spoilage, and disrupted food distribution.

- **Health risks:** food poisoning, diarrhea, reduced access to food.