

# Climate and Your Health: Staying Safe



Our environment has a big impact on our health and well-being. As the climate changes, it's important to understand how it affects us and how to stay safe and healthy.

## Air Pollution

Climate change is expected to increase air pollution. This can worsen respiratory diseases, such as asthma. It can also decrease lung function. Check the air quality at [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov). Limit time outdoors on days with poor air quality. Plan outdoor activities when ozone levels are lower, usually in the morning or evening. You might also use an air purifier indoors.

## Allergens and pollen

Climate change may lead to higher pollen concentration and longer pollen seasons. Higher seasonal temperatures, changes in precipitation and higher carbon dioxide levels can cause plants to make more pollen. This can trigger allergies and worsen asthma symptoms. Take steps to prevent allergies during peak seasons. Use allergy medicines as prescribed and keep windows closed as much as possible.

## Diseases from animals and insects

Some diseases are spread by animals or insects. For instance, bats may carry rabies, ticks can spread Lyme disease and mosquitoes carry West Nile virus. Changes in climate mean that some of these diseases are spreading in new places and during different seasons than before. To reduce your risk, use insect repellents and wear protective clothing. Stay away from wild animals.

## Food and water

Climate change may cause problems in food production, food quality, distribution and pricing. Climate change may also cause problems with safe water sources. It's a good idea to store extra food and a safe source of water at home in the event of an emergency. You could even grow your own food in a garden.

## Extreme heat

Exposure to extreme heat can be harmful to your health. Drink plenty of water during heatwaves. Avoid drinking sugary or alcoholic drinks. Dress lightly and avoid being active outdoors when it's very hot. Try to stay in air conditioned places as much as possible.

## Floods, wildfires, and other natural disasters

Have a plan for getting to safety if there is a flood, fire, earthquake, or other disaster. Make sure you understand the risks in your area. Climate change can alter the types of disasters that occur in your area. Floods or fires can happen in places they've never occurred before. Keep an emergency kit stocked with food, water and emergency supplies. Check that your insurance policy covers these events.

## Mental health

Climate change can be scary and stressful and may affect your mental health in many different ways. Talk with your family and friends about your feelings and concerns. Seeking the help of a professional therapist or counselor may help as well. Try engaging in activities to help ease stress, like meditating or exercising.

## Learn more

Making choices that help the environment can also make you feel better. Go to [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov) to find appliances and other products that use less energy. That's good for the environment and helps save you money.

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