

FAST FACTS



On climate and health

1. Climate change is a major threat to people's health. The impacts are already harming people through air pollution, disease, extreme weather events, forced displacement, food insecurity and pressures on mental health.
2. 3.6 billion people already live in areas highly susceptible to climate change. Avoiding the worst climate impacts could help prevent 250,000 additional climate-related deaths per year from 2030 to 2050, mainly from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and heat stress.
3. The direct damage costs to health (excluding costs in sectors such as agriculture and water and sanitation) is estimated to be between \$2–4 billion per year by 2030.
4. About 99 per cent of people breathe unhealthy levels of air pollution, largely resulting from the burning of fossil fuels, which also drives climate change. Air pollution in turn can lead to respiratory diseases, strokes, and heart attacks. The health damage caused by air pollution amounts to \$8.1 trillion a year, equivalent to 6.1 per cent of global GDP.
5. Replacing fossil fuel-based power plants with renewable energy, such as wind or solar farms, will greatly benefit human health. Wind turbines and solar panels do not release emissions that pollute the air or cause global warming.
6. Transportation produces around 20 per cent of global carbon emissions. Alternatives like walking and cycling are not only green but also offer major health benefits, such as reducing the risk of many chronic health conditions and improving mental health.
7. Health systems are the main line of defense for populations faced with emerging health threats, including from climate change. To protect health and avoid widening health inequities, countries must build climate-resilient health systems.
8. The majority of countries identify health as a priority sector vulnerable to climate change. But a huge finance gap remains. Less than 2 per cent of multilateral climate finance goes to health projects. The majority (91 per cent) of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement now include health considerations. A growing number of NDCs (11 per cent) include an emissions reduction commitment for the healthcare sector.
9. Healthy societies rely on well-functioning ecosystems to provide clean air, fresh water, medicines and food security. These help to limit disease and stabilize the climate. But biodiversity loss is happening at an unprecedented rate, impacting human health worldwide and increasing the risk of emerging infectious diseases.



10. Shifting to more balanced, healthy diets can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and at the same time improve people's health.

Sources: WHO (1, 2, 3), WHO (4), World Bank (4), REN21 (5), WHO (6), IPCC (6), WHO (7), WHO (8), WHO (9), IPCC (10)

