

# Introduction: how to use this guide



Each issue in this guide can be used as a stand-alone resource, or in connection with other topics.

Thank you for your interest in climate change, health and equity! As a physician, your voice is critical in promoting actions that address climate change and its impacts on health, and that improve health equity. There are many ways physicians can make a big difference — with your patients, in your practice and health care institutions, and most importantly, in your community and the policy arenas.

A Physician's Guide to Climate Change, Health and Equity is a resource to inform and strengthen your voice in whatever forum you choose to act. The Guide explores the complex and multifaceted connections between climate change and health, disproportionate burdens and the impacts on health equity, and opportunities for solutions. It is not designed for you to read and absorb all at once: it is filled with a lot of detailed information and data. Rather, it is meant to be a resource that you can use to prepare for various conversations such as media interviews, visits with legislators or policymakers, community talks, as well as to create news articles, professional presentations or policy resolutions.

## What's included

The guide is organized into three main sections, which include individual areas of focus that can be used as stand-alone resources, or in connection with other topic sheets.

The first topics covered in the guide provide a foundational understanding of climate change science, health equity and the physician role in climate change and health:

- Physician Action Guide
- Climate Change 101: climate science basics
- Climate Change and Health Equity
- Physician Surveys on Climate Change and Health

The guide then dives into specific climate change impacts and their effects on health and health equity, with a focus on California and the U.S. These impacts include drought, extreme heat, vector-borne disease, extreme weather, mental health, food security and others. We have also included topics of special focus, such as the impact of climate change on children, workers and pregnant women. Each of these topic sheets includes short sections on:

- Relevant health impacts
- Climate change risks
- Health equity issues
- What you can do to promote change



You may want to tailor your reading to the topics that are most pertinent to a particular audience, to your specialty area, or to the issue or concern that you plan to discuss with a local elected official.

You will also find links to more information, additional resources and to other topic sheets. For example, the topic sheet on drought has cross-references to the sheets on infectious disease, wildfires and food security, as drought worsens all of these risks. The sheets provide strategies to address the particular climate change threat at various levels — ranging from patient care to policy advocacy.

The final section focuses on co-benefit solutions for climate change and health, those strategies we can take to not only slow climate change, but improve health and health equity. These include co-benefit strategies for transportation, energy production, food systems & agriculture and urban greening & green infrastructure.

## Using the Guide

Each issue in this guide can be used as a stand-alone resource, or in connection with other topics. When using the guide, pull from the various issue topics to paint a picture that conveys:

- The specific climate change problem(s)
- Its impacts on health and equity
- What can be done
- An “ask” or call to action

It is also critical to share your personal experiences of the effects of climate change on health: what have you witnessed in your practice? What are you hearing from patients and communities? How have you seen solutions put to work to improve health and slow climate change?

### Focus areas

You may want to tailor your reading to the topics that are most pertinent to a particular audience, to your specialty area, or to the issue or concern that you plan to discuss with a local elected official. For example, if you are talking to hospital personnel or local emergency management staff, you might want to focus on topics that address extreme weather events, as well as mental health. As an OB/GYN, you will of course be interested in the sheet on pregnant women, but you may also want to focus on food security, since nutrition is a vital aspect of healthy pregnancy. For a discussion with a local Air Quality Management District or a legislator considering emissions limits, the Air Quality sheet will obviously be most handy, as will the co-benefits sheet on Transportation and Energy.

As Margaret Chan of the World Health Organization has stated, climate change is the defining public health issue of this century and we hope this guide equips you with the information and resources to take action. Working together, at all levels, we can make a difference and ensure healthy people, healthy places and a healthy planet for all.

We welcome your feedback on the guide, including opportunities to co-brand and tailor it to your stakeholder population. In addition, if you are interested in becoming more involved as a Climate Change and Health Champion, please contact us at [info@climatehealthconnect.org](mailto:info@climatehealthconnect.org).

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