

# Physician Action Guide



As a physician, you play a vital role in protecting the health of patients and community, especially in the era of climate change.

“A climate crisis is also a health crisis, and we must first direct solutions and resources to our most vulnerable and already affected communities.”

–Linda Rudolph, MD, New York Times Letter to the Editor, May 2014

As a physician, you play a vital role in protecting the health of patients and communities, especially in the era of climate change. There are many ways that you can act as a Climate and Health Champion at home, in your practice, in your local community, and more widely. While action at all levels is important — from your own home to advocacy for national action — physicians have an especially important role to play in influencing community leaders and policy-makers who make decisions with larger impacts.



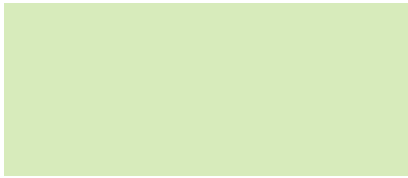
## Personal Action

- Take steps to reduce your own carbon footprint.
  - Walk or bike instead of driving; drive a low- or no-carbon vehicle.
  - Reduce meat consumption; purchase local, fresh and seasonal food.
  - Be energy efficient at home and in your office: use energy efficient appliances, electronics, and light bulbs.
  - Purchase renewable energy if you can.



## Patient Care

- Place climate change educational materials in your office.
  - Brochures, fact sheets, posters about climate change and health
- Look for appropriate ways to incorporate climate change and health into patient education materials (e.g, disease management plans, discharge materials, medication sheets, etc).
  - Educate patients on the effect of heat on storage and dosing of insulin.
- Make sure climate change impacts are addressed in disease management and care protocols.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Physicians have an especially important role to play in influencing community leaders and policy-makers who make decisions with larger impacts.

- Advise asthma patients to check the [Air Quality Index](#) whenever it is hot or windy, or there are wildfires in the region.
- Incorporate a climate change assessment into home visits or home environment assessments. and refer patients for appropriate resources.
  - Heat vulnerability: lack of air conditioning, ventilation or shading within home; tree cover around the home: refer for weatherization, energy efficiency, tree planting and inform about places to stay cool in a heat wave.
- Connect patients to community resources for climate resilience.
  - [LIHEAP](#): Low-income home energy assistance program



## Organizational & Professional Action

- Speak with your clinic and hospital facility operators about energy efficiency and procurement strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation.
  - Minimize landfill and incineration use for waste disposal.
  - Procure supplies locally to reduce transport-related emissions.
  - Source clinic or hospital food locally and sustainably.
- Speak on the health impacts of climate change, and strategies to address them, with colleagues at brown bag lunches, grand rounds, professional meetings, conferences, etc.
  - Present what your clinic is doing to address the problem.
- Urge your professional organizations and affiliations to take up climate change as a priority health topic via a resolution, position paper or conference theme.
  - [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), [American College of Physicians](#), and others have papers and reports on climate change.



## Community Involvement

- Speak on the health impacts of climate change, and strategies to address them, at your local churches, clubs, or community meetings.
  - School board, city council, parent-teacher association and chamber of commerce
- Include climate change and health information when your clinic participates in community events
  - Community health fairs, National Night Out, seasonal festivals
- Support action for healthy communities
  - [Safe Routes to School](#), bike lanes
  - Community gardens
  - Local climate action plans
  - Local zoning for walkable and bike-able neighborhoods



Write to and visit your local state legislator and city council members to help them understand that climate change is a health equity issue, and to form relationships for ongoing advocacy, Speak on local radio or television programs about climate change and health.



## Policy & Advocacy Action

- Write to and visit your local state legislator and city council members to help them understand that climate change is a health equity issue, and to form relationships for ongoing advocacy.
- Provide testimony or comments on the health benefits of bills that take action on climate change, including relevant housing, transportation, water, agriculture bills.
- Participate in writing a Legislative Brief on Climate Change and Health.



## Media opportunities

- Pen an Op-Ed in your local or regional newspaper on the connections between climate change and health equity.
- Capitalize on current events: Write letters to the Editor after relevant events, such as extreme weather events, about the connection between events, climate change and health.
- Speak on local radio or television programs about climate change and health.

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