**Communication Materials on Climate Change, Health, and People with Existing Medical Conditions**

***Summary Points from the U.S. Climate and Health Assessment***

# Background

In April 2016, the United States Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) released a new assessment report about a growing threat to public health: climate change. Drawing upon decades of research on the physical science of climate change, [*The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment*](https://health2016.globalchange.gov/) presents information on the increased risks that climate change poses to human health.

The U.S. Climate and Health Assessment significantly advances what we know about the impacts of climate change on public health. It also highlights factors that make some individuals and communities especially vulnerable to these threats.

During public forums, scientific conferences, webinars and meetings, as well as in public comments submitted during the development of the U.S. Climate and Health Assessment, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) received multiple requests for summary materials that would help communicate the message that certain populations are disproportionately vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change. In response to these requests, EPA has summarized information from the U.S. Climate and Health Assessment focusing on impacts of climate change on the health on **eight populations of concern**:

* Communities with environmental justice concerns
* Indigenous peoples
* Pregnant women
* Children
* Older Adults
* Occupational groups
* People with pre-existing health conditions
* People with disabilities

For each of these groups, EPA has compiled a suite of communication materials for use by stakeholders who are looking for concise, accurate language to aid conversations with their constituent groups on climate and health impacts. Communication materials specific to each of the populations listed above, as well as general summary messages on climate change, health, and populations of concern, can be found here: <https://www.epa.gov/climate-impacts/climate-change-health-and-populations-concern>.

# How to Use These Materials

Public health workers, local and state government officials, educators, advocacy organizations, and community leaders have a critical voice in communicating important health information to the people who need it the most.

In response to request from stakeholders, EPA has prepared materials to help communicate key messages on the impacts of climate change on human health. The information in these materials is tailored for anyone interested in **environmental health risks to people with pre-existing medical conditions**.

These communication materials, derived from the U.S. Climate and Health Assessment, include:

* A factsheet, in English and Spanish, available online and as a printable PDF.
* A customizable PowerPoint presentation.
* High-Resolution images.
* An introductory paragraph on vulnerable populations.
* Key points about risks to people with existing medical conditions.
* Shorter messages about risks to people with existing medical conditions.

Because the availability of good information leads to better public health and environmental protection, these materials are designed to be used or modified to inform conversations about climate change and health impacts to vulnerable populations. For questions or assistance, please email [climatehealth@epa.gov](mailto:climatehealth@epa.gov).

# Electronic and Print Resources

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|  | **A Factsheet** onClimate Change and the Health of People with Existing Medical Conditions (two pages) is available in web and print formats, in English and Spanish. | <https://www.epa.gov/climate-impacts/communicating-vulnerabilities-climate-change-existing-health-conditions> |
|  | A **customizable PowerPoint template** with talking points can be used at conferences and meetings as a standalone presentation or added to existing slides. |
| **\\betfile01\DATA1\Common\ERD\COOLIT-CLIMECON4_EPA-CCD\Task Orders\COOLIT 010 Support for Climate Communication Products - Health\task 5\fact sheet outreach\thumbnails for PPT and social media\Existing_Thumbnail.jpg** | **High Resolution Images** can be compelling when paired with other outreach materials. Images are sized for various uses and platforms. |
|  | A **clickable map** with examples of state-by-state health impacts and resources to prepare and respond to climate threats | <https://www.epa.gov/climate-impacts/climate-change-and-human-health-risks-your-state> |
| A **ten-question interactive online quiz-** challenge your friends on social media! | <https://www.epa.gov/climate-impacts/quiz-how-much-do-you-know-about-health-impacts-climate-change> |
| **Climate Change Impacts Website** | <https://www.epa.gov/climate-impacts> |
| **cover.jpg** | **U.S. Climate and Health Assessment Chapter 9: Populations of concern** | <https://health2016.globalchange.gov/populations-concern> |

**Summary text**

*The language below can be used or modified for different formats or mediums, to communicate how climate change threatens the health of people with pre-existing medical conditions.*

**Introductory Paragraph**

Existing medical conditions can make individuals more sensitive to these climate change-related exposures, increasing the potential for health impacts and worsening their symptoms. The United States Global Change Research Program’s (USGCRP) new report, [*The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment*](https://health2016.globalchange.gov/),presents information on the factors that make people with pre-existing health conditions more sensitive to environmental hazards related to climate change. More information about these impacts and disparities, as well as outreach and communication materials including a factsheet (in English and Spanish), summary key points, a customizable PowerPoint presentation, and high-resolution images, can be found here: <https://www.epa.gov/climate-impacts/communicating-vulnerabilities-climate-change-existing-health-conditions>.

**Key Points**

* Climate change affects the food we eat, the air we breathe, and the water we drink. It also leads to extreme weather events, like flooding, droughts, and wildfires. All of these impacts have an effect on human health.
* The United States Global Change Research Program’s (USGCRP) new report, [*The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment*](https://health2016.globalchange.gov/), presents information on the increased risks that climate change poses to human health and welfare and highlights factors that make some individuals and communities especially vulnerable.
* Existing medical conditions can make individuals more sensitive to climate change-related exposures, increasing the potential for health impacts and worsening their symptoms. A new fact sheet from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Climate Change and the Health of People with Existing Medical Conditions,* presents information on the factors that make people with pre-existing health conditions more sensitive to environmental hazards related to climate change.
* People with existing medical conditions are at increased risk for illness and death from climate change-related impacts on health, including changing exposures to extreme heat, extreme weather events, and poor air quality.
* People with the following illnesses should be aware that:
  + **Heart Disease.** Drugs used to treat heart diseases, such as diuretics and beta-blockers, can make people with heart disease more sensitive to heat stress.
  + **Diabetes**. Diabetes increases sensitivity to heat stress. Extreme weather events can also present challenges for diabetics because these events can limit access to healthcare, medicine, and food needed to stay healthy.
  + **Asthma and COPD**. Patients with asthma and COPD are more sensitive than the general population to changes in outdoor air quality made worse by climate change.
  + **Alzheimer’s Disease**. Alzheimer’s disease can impair judgment and responses in a crisis situation, such as an extreme weather event, which can place people at greater risk.
  + **Mental Illness**. Some medications for certain mental illnesses can increase sensitivity to heat stress. Extreme weather events may also disrupt communication lines and social support networks that people with mental illnesses need to stay healthy.
* Understanding the threats that climate change poses to human health can help us work together to lower risks and be prepared. People with chronic medical conditions and their families or caregivers can start taking steps now to protect themselves against the negative impacts of climate change.

**Shorter Messages**

* People with existing medical conditions are at increased risk for illness and death from climate change-related impacts on health. [go.usa.gov/xkspV](http://go.usa.gov/xkspV)
* Existing medical conditions can make individuals more sensitive to climate change-related exposures, increasing potential for health impacts. [go.usa.gov/xkspV](http://go.usa.gov/xkspV)
* People with respiratory conditions are more likely to be negatively affected by exposure to poor air quality than those without. [go.usa.gov/xkspV](http://go.usa.gov/xkspV)
* People with Alzheimer’s disease may have difficulty responding to and evacuating during an extreme weather event. [go.usa.gov/xkspV](http://go.usa.gov/xkspV)
* As the number of people with chronic conditions increases, more people will be at risk of medical complications from climate change exposures. [go.usa.gov/xkspV](http://go.usa.gov/xkspV)