CLIMATE CHANGE
PUBLIC HEALTH BRIEF

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Harford County Health Department

OVERVIEW

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns and causes many threats to the health and well-being of all. Weather changes are not the only impact climate change has in our world, it affects the food we eat, the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the places that provide us with shelter. Climate change can also have an impact by altering the frequency or intensity of extreme weather events and the spread of certain pests and diseases.

Climate change shifts can be natural, due to changes in the sun's activity, or large volcanic eruptions, however, since the 1800s, most shifts have been caused by human activities, such as burning fossil fuels, like coal, oil, and gas. Burning fossil fuels generates greenhouse gas emissions that act like a blanket wrapped around the earth, trapping the sun's heat and raising temperatures.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN HEALTH

Climate change has a major impact on human health. This can change the seriousness or frequency of health issues that already exist in one's life or by creating new or unanticipated health problems in people or places where they have not existed before. Below are ways that climate change can impact human health, according to the CDC.

DATA
12-month temperature averages in Harford County, MD

PREVENTION

Save energy at home. Use less energy by reducing your heating and cooling use, switching to LED light bulbs and energy-efficient electric appliances, washing your laundry with cold water, or hanging things to dry instead of using a dryer.

Change your home's source of energy. Ask your utility company if your home energy comes from oil, coal, or gas. If possible, see if you can switch to renewable sources such as wind or solar. Or install solar panels on your roof to generate energy for your home.
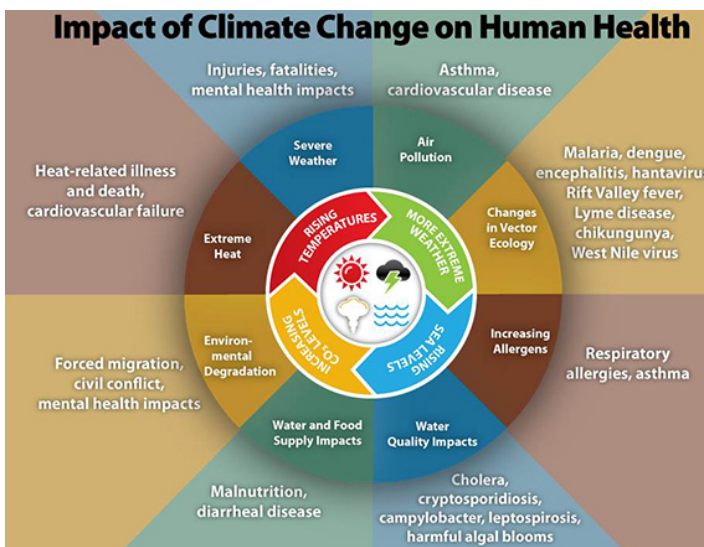
Walk, bike, or take public transport. The world's roadways are clogged with vehicles, most of them burning diesel or gasoline. Walking or riding a bike instead of driving will reduce greenhouse gas emissions -- and help your health and fitness. For longer distances, consider taking a train or bus. And carpool whenever possible.

Switch to an electric vehicle. Consider using an electric car. In many countries, electric cars help reduce air pollution and cause significantly fewer greenhouse gas emissions than gas or diesel-powered vehicles.

Reduce, reuse, repair, and recycle. Buy fewer things, shop second-hand, and repair what you can.

Throw away less food. When food rots in a landfill, it produces methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. So purchase only what you need, use what you buy, and compost any leftovers.

Clean up your environment. Use what you need, and when you have to throw something out, dispose of it properly. Educate others to do the same, and participate in local clean-ups of parks, rivers, beaches, and beyond.

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