

Climate & Health 101: An Introductory Crash Course

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Duration: 60 minutes



Welcome & Your Journey Today

As a physician and advocate, I've seen firsthand how climate change impacts our communities and our patients. It's a health crisis we can no longer ignore.

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1 Setting the Stage	2 Health Connections	3 Why Health Professionals?
Understanding climate change basics.	Exploring climate's direct health impacts.	Our unique role in this global challenge.
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4 Practical Steps	5 Q&A & Call to Action	
What we can do, individually and collectively.	Your questions and next steps.	

Let's begin with a quick poll: "What comes to mind when you hear 'climate and health'?"



Setting the Stage: Understanding Climate Change

It's crucial to distinguish between **weather**—the short-term atmospheric conditions—and **climate**, which is the long-term patterns and averages. Climate change refers to significant, lasting changes in these global weather patterns.

At its core, climate change is driven by the enhanced greenhouse effect. Gases like carbon dioxide and methane, released primarily from human activities such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation, trap heat in Earth's atmosphere, leading to a warming planet.

Key Takeaway: Climate change isn't an abstract future threat—it's a present reality impacting lives, especially across vulnerable regions like Nigeria and the wider African continent.

Climate Change & Health: Unpacking the Connections

The health impacts of a changing climate are multifaceted and disproportionately affect communities with limited resources. Here are five critical ways our health is connected:

Heat & Extreme Weather

Increased heat-related illnesses and injuries from severe events.

Compromised Air Quality

Worsening respiratory and cardiovascular conditions.

Shifting Infectious Diseases

Changes in disease vectors and transmission patterns.

Food & Water Insecurity

Leading to malnutrition and waterborne illnesses.

Mental Health Challenges

Increased stress, anxiety, and trauma.

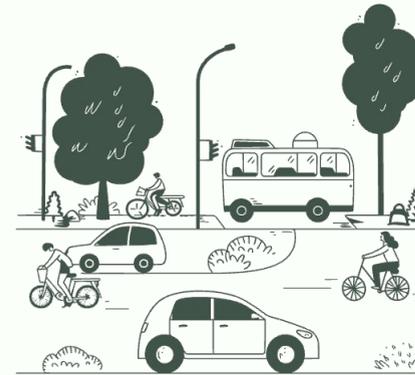
Direct Impacts: Heat & Air Quality

Heat & Extreme Weather



Rising global temperatures lead to more frequent and intense heatwaves, particularly dangerous in urban areas like Lagos, Nigeria. This results in heatstroke, dehydration, and exacerbation of cardiovascular conditions. Furthermore, extreme events like flooding, as seen in Nigeria's 2022 devastating floods, cause injuries, displacement, and loss of life.

Compromised Air Quality



Climate change contributes to poorer air quality through increased wildfires and dust storms, alongside urban pollution. In cities like Port Harcourt, Nigeria, industrial emissions combine with climate factors to worsen conditions like asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), and cardiovascular diseases. Vulnerable populations, including children and the elderly, bear the brunt of these impacts.

Expanding Threats: Infectious Diseases & Food/Water Security

Shifting Infectious Diseases



Warmer temperatures and altered rainfall patterns expand the geographic range and seasonality of vector-borne diseases. Malaria, a leading cause of mortality in Africa, can spread to new regions as mosquitoes thrive. Waterborne diseases like cholera, often linked to contaminated water supplies after floods, become more prevalent, as witnessed in Nigeria following recent heavy rains.

Food & Water Insecurity



Droughts, floods, and unpredictable rainfall disrupt agricultural systems, particularly for smallholder farmers across Africa. This leads to reduced crop yields and livestock losses, increasing food insecurity and malnutrition. Contaminated water sources, due to extreme weather, exacerbate diarrheal diseases, a major cause of child mortality in many African countries.

Hidden Costs: Mental Health & Our Responsibility

The constant threat of environmental disasters, loss of livelihoods, and displacement due to climate change profoundly impact mental well-being. Communities in the Sahel region, facing prolonged droughts, experience increased eco-anxiety and despair. Survivors of floods in Nigeria often grapple with post-traumatic stress and depression.

Why Health Professionals Must Care



Trusted Voices

We are uniquely positioned to educate and advocate, framing climate change as a critical health issue that resonates with communities.



Healthcare's Footprint

Hospitals and healthcare systems contribute significantly to carbon emissions; we must lead by example in reducing our environmental impact.



Advocacy Imperative

Aligning with global efforts like the WHO's "Health Argument for Climate Action" strengthens our collective voice for policy change.

Practical Steps: What Can We Do?

Addressing climate and health requires action at every level—from personal choices to systemic changes. Each step, big or small, contributes to a healthier, more resilient future.



Individual Lifestyle Shifts

Embrace sustainable diets, reduce energy consumption, opt for public transport or cycling, and minimize waste. Small personal changes accumulate into significant collective impact.



Professional & Institutional Actions

Advocate for "greening" hospitals, reducing medical waste, and integrating climate considerations into research and training. Implement sustainable practices within your medical practice.



Community Engagement & Advocacy

Participate in public health education campaigns on climate risks, support community-led climate adaptation initiatives, and advocate for health-protective climate policies at all levels of government.



Community Impact & Your Role

Think about your immediate environment. If you could change one thing in your hospital or community to protect health from climate change, what would it be?

Open Floor: Your Questions Answered

Now, let's open the floor for your questions. Don't be shy! We've also prepared a few FAQs in case you need a moment:

- ❓ **FAQ:** Is climate change truly exacerbating diseases like malaria in new areas?
- FAQ:** What's the most effective way for a busy clinician to get involved in climate advocacy?

Climate Action is Health Action

Let's summarize our core message:

- **Climate change is an undeniable public health crisis.**
- **Health professionals are vital to both understanding and solving this crisis.**
- **Our collective action, no matter how small, can drive monumental impact.**

For more resources, explore the [WHO Climate & Health](#) initiatives and the [Lancet Countdown](#) reports.

We are the generation that must bridge the gap between climate science and health protection. Your voice, your expertise, and your actions matter.

