

Climate Changes Children's Health



The burning of fossil fuels causes the release of carbon dioxide, which builds up in the atmosphere and causes Earth's temperature to rise—this is climate change. Upstream burning of fossil fuels produces heat-trapping toxins that are released into the air, harming our health downstream. The Earth's average temperature has increased by nearly 1.5°F in the last century, with recent years being the warmest on record. However, climate change refers to the lasting disruption of our weather patterns, not just temperature increases. Some of these weather-related changes include increased floods and droughts, wildfires, intense storms, heat waves, and rising sea levels. These conditions have far-reaching environmental, social, agricultural, and economic effects and are ultimately harmful to our health and well-being. Children's health, wellness, and safety are affected by climate change.

BACKGROUND ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Children are especially vulnerable to climate change because of their physical and cognitive immaturity:

- Compared to adults, children breathe more air and drink more fluid for their body weight. Also, because they are shorter and spend more time on the ground, they are closer to ground-level pollutants. These factors cause children to have higher exposure levels than adults.
- Children engage in different behaviors from adults, including what they eat and activities such as crawling on the ground and hand-to-mouth activities. These behaviors make them more vulnerable to air, water, and soil exposures.
- Children have immature immune and organ systems. Thus, they

