



Advocacy in action: Combatting health effects of climate change

What's at stake

"Climate change" refers to long-term shifts in temperature and weather patterns. The world's climate is affected by many different factors, including natural forces, such as changes to the sun's activity or volcanic eruptions. Concern has grown in recent decades about the connection of human activities to rapid climate change, such as the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, and the impacts on health.

Climate change has adversely affected people's physical and mental health. Climate-related risks are not distributed equally. The AMA recognizes that minoritized and marginalized populations, children, pregnant people, the elderly, rural communities and those who are economically disadvantaged will suffer disproportionate harm from climate change.

Climate change is impacting the health of all human beings in many ways. The American Medical Association has declared climate change a public health crisis that threatens the health and well-being of all individuals.

The AMA's position

The AMA has called for limiting global warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius, as well as reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions aimed at a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2050. Relevant policies adopted by the AMA House of Delegates:

- Declaring Climate Change a Public Health Crisis
- Global Climate Change and Human Health
- Climate Change Education Across the Medical Education Continuum

AMA advocacy in action



The AMA has:

- Sent a letter joining 23 other medical organizations in asking the administration to keep the country's obligations to the Paris Climate Agreement.
- Signed on to the U.S. Call to Action on Climate, Health, and Equity: Policy Action Agenda
- Filed an amicus brief (PDF) on whether the Federal Environment Protection Agency (EPA) can enact regulations that restrict the total carbon dioxide emissions from all power plants within a state.
- Sent letters to the EPA:
 - Supporting (PDF) their proposed regulations to implement the Methane Emissions Reduction Program's Waste Emissions Charge for Petroleum and Natural Gas Systems to help reduce methane emissions in the U.S.
 - Asking (PDF) it to adopt the most stringent emission standards possible with existing technologies, in regard to the proposed rule on Pollutant Emissions Standards for Model Years 2027 and Later Light-Duty and Medium-Duty Vehicles.
 - Proposing (PDF) it issue a final rule strengthening National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants: Coal- and Oil-Fired Electric Utility Steam Generating Units Review of the Residual Risk and Technology Review.

Environment & public health

Explore education from Natural Resources Defense Council about the effect of environmental changes on public health and learn how to help do your part.

Learn on AMA Ed Hub™

Additional resources

The AMA's 2024 strategic plan (PDF) to enact its climate change policies includes four priorities:

1. Educate physicians and trainees on the health effects of climate change.
 1. Continuing medical education on climate change from AMA Ed Hub™.
 1. CDC'S *HeatRisk* Dashboard serves as a portal for heat-related resources, including the HeatRisk Forecast Tool, details on local air quality, actions to stay safe on hot days or days with poor air quality, and clinical guidance on heat and health.
2. Identify and disseminate information to physicians on decarbonizing the health care sector and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
 1. Guide for practices looking to "go green" (PDF)



2. Improving Environmental Sustainability in Your Medical Practice, with Todd Sack, MD, FACP (Webinar)
3. What a sustainable diet means—for your patients and the planet
3. Elevate the voices of physician leaders on the issue of climate change and health.
 1. Public health: the challenges and opportunities physicians face, with Frederick Chen, MD, MPH (Podcast)
 2. Renee Salas, MD, MPH, MS, on intersection of health and the climate crisis (Video)
 3. Climate change's effects on human health with Colin Cave, MD (Video)
4. Collaborate with stakeholders to advance policies and interventions with a unified voice.
 1. The AMA is a member of the National Academy of Medicine Action Collaborative on Decarbonizing the Health Sector.
 2. National Academy of Medicine Action Collaborative is combating climate change with Victor Dzau, MD (Video)

See all AMA policies on climate change.

Learn more

Visit AMA Advocacy in Action to learn more about the advocacy priorities the AMA is actively working on.

Get involved

The AMA works to generate support for policies critical to the nation's health care system—and we can't do it without your help. Learn more about ways to get involved with AMA advocacy.