

Environmental Health

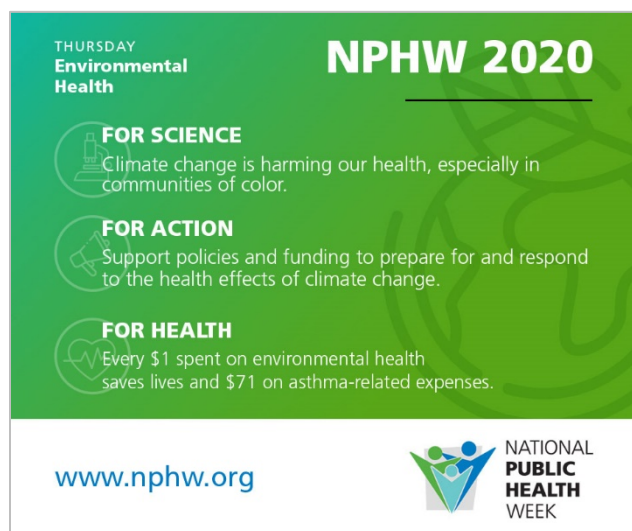
The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, and the condition of our homes all affect our health.¹ The **Vermont Public Health Association** recognizes the connection between climate change and human health. There is clear evidence that Vermont’s climate has been changing during the last 50 years; mean winter temperatures have risen 4.5 degrees Fahrenheit, and mean summer temperatures have risen 2 degrees Fahrenheit. Anticipated changes also include earlier snow melt and heavier summer rains. Warming will occur through the next century even with significant reductions in new emissions.

Winter temperatures are rising particularly quickly in the northeastern US. Since 1970, the average temperature in Burlington has risen 7 degrees F.²

Continued climate change will have serious ramifications for human health. The health effects of climate change are likely to be negative, impacting social and environmental determinants of health including clean air, safe drinking water, housing, employment, and transportation. Key climate-related health risks that may affect our region include increased heat-related morbidity and mortality, increased allergic sensitization, respiratory illness, and cardiovascular illness, increased occurrence of water-borne and food-borne illness, and increased transmission of insect-borne diseases such as Eastern Equine Encephalitis, West Nile virus, and Lyme Disease.³

Vermont has the highest per capita incidence of Lyme disease in the nation.⁴

Vermont health risks can include increased heat-related emergency-room visits and deaths; increased blue-green algae in lakes and ponds; increased water-borne illness caused by flooding and water supply contamination; increased mental illness related to stress and depression; increases in insect-borne disease; more seasonal allergies and asthma, and increased illness and death related to more frequent and severe rainfall events. Indirectly, we may see impacts on food production and distribution; reduced funding available for health care, social services and education due to climate change-related expenditures; reduction in personal assets and loss of infrastructure due to more frequent severe weather events.⁵



THURSDAY
Environmental
Health


NPHW 2020

FOR SCIENCE
Climate change is harming our health, especially in communities of color.

FOR ACTION
Support policies and funding to prepare for and respond to the health effects of climate change.

FOR HEALTH
Every \$1 spent on environmental health saves lives and \$71 on asthma-related expenses.

www.nphw.org



NATIONAL
PUBLIC
HEALTH
WEEK

As the pandemic of COVID-19 becomes under control, we need to apply the lessons learned in combatting this world wide health threat to the continued aggressive tackling of the climate crisis. Read the blog on the similarities and effects of these two threats by experts at Columbia University:

<https://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2020/03/26/covid-19-lessons-climate-change/>

¹ [The Value of Environmental Health Services](#)

^{2, 4, 5, 6} [Vermont Climate & Health Alliance](#)

³ [Vermont Public Health Association](#)