



Health  
Canada

Santé  
Canada

Canada

Your *Health* and a  
Changing *Climate*



# A Changing Climate



Our climate is changing and we are experiencing more extreme weather patterns, which can affect our health and well-being. The present climate change may be partly due to natural causes and partly due to greenhouse gases from fuel combustion, which build up in our atmosphere, trap heat, and cause the planet to get warmer. The extent of climate change and its effects will differ across the country, as some parts, including the Arctic, will warm more or warm faster than others. The warmer climate will bring with it more variable and more extreme weather patterns, such as heat waves or severe cold, storms, droughts and floods.

## A Better Understanding

Scientists have a good understanding of the physical factors that influence our climate. For example, we know that motor vehicle exhaust and other emissions from burning fuels contribute to the warming of the globe. What we need now is a better understanding of how a warmer earth will affect our health and well-being, and how we can adapt to the changes in the climate which we are already experiencing. Efforts by the various levels of government and by the private sector are already underway to conserve energy and to limit and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that cause climate change. Although this will help in the future, impacts from climate change and its more extreme weather patterns are being felt already in some parts of Canada.



# Potential Health Impacts

*A* warmer climate and its more extreme weather can bring about an increase in illnesses such as asthma and allergies, respiratory and cardiovascular stress—especially in people who are not in good health, who work outdoors or in hot environments, in the elderly, and in the young. We need to better understand how climate change can affect us, and how we can best manage the risks to our health and well-being which can result from a changing climate.

## What is Health Canada Doing?

Health Canada is the federal agency responsible for safeguarding and promoting the physical, mental and social health of Canadians. Its **Climate Change and Health Office** facilitates the research needed to produce sound public health policies to help cope with the effects of climate change. The Climate Change and Health Office works with all levels of government, with researchers and policy makers, and with private sector and community organizations to integrate health considerations into research and educational activities and into health policies related to climate change. One of its priorities is to lead the development of the research agenda on climate change and human health and well-being. The Office also fosters the development of national policies for assessing, managing and communicating the health risks associated with a changing climate.


## Collaborating for Better Results

*By* bringing together researchers, policy analysts and public health organizations, the Climate Change and Health Office encourages the development of health research, and of sound national health policies and health action plans. It achieves this by working with other agencies and researchers, by improving access to research results, and by sharing policy developments on climate change. In addition to hosting conferences and meetings to facilitate cooperation amongst researchers and policy makers, the Office serves as a clearing house for information on research funding and on the health impacts of climate change.



## Helping the People of Canada Maintain and Improve Their Health

*To* be able to adapt successfully to the changing climate, we need to understand its impact on human health and well-being, and we need to find new solutions which will help us to cope with the environmental changes. This requires combining knowledge from many fields of science to develop improved policies and actions that will help maintain our health and well-being. The efforts of the Climate Change and Health Office to stimulate collaboration between researchers and policy analysts will help to create such health policies and action plans at the community, regional and national levels.





## For More Information

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