



Climate Change is the biggest health threat facing humanity
– World Health Organisation



Healthy environments create healthy humans



Healthy and thriving ecosystems provide all the services humans need to survive and flourish. For generations, the environment has provided us with:

- Nutritious food
- Clean drinking water
- Clean air to breathe
- Medicines
- Materials for shelter



Even just time spent in nature helps us to live happy, healthy lives. Physical exercise in the outdoors has proven to have particularly restorative benefits, including:

- Reducing risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, cognitive decline
- Enhancing stress recovery
- Enhancing mood



Physical health affects our mental health

Experiencing a natural disaster can affect people psychologically, socially, and economically. As well as risks to human life, property may be lost, pets and livestock killed, communities and livelihoods threatened, and home environments destroyed. These compounding impacts contribute to mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicide.

Physical health risks in a changing climate

Climate change poses both direct and indirect risks to human health. Some being obvious, whilst some being a little more hidden.



Longer and hotter heatwaves are forecast for the Macedon Ranges.

This will affect our physical health in many varying ways.

Direct

Extreme heat and heatwaves can result in:

- Dehydration
- Heat stress
- Heat stroke
- Worsening of heart, lung, and kidney disease.
- Asthma and other respiratory allergies complaints increase due to atmospheric dust or other pollutants
- Adverse impacts on pregnant women and birth outcomes, including increased pre-term birth, low birth weight, increased stillbirth rates and neonatal stress
- Mortality (heatwaves takes more lives in Australia than any other environmental disaster)

Indirect

Extreme heat can also increase likelihood of power outages, which can:

- Heighten cases of heat stress for those reliant on air-conditioning
- Compromise refrigerated medications/vaccines
- Increase likelihood of food spoilage and food poisoning

Extreme heat also decreases the available hours for outdoor physical exercise and community sport:

- Community volunteers will need to refer to the Sport Medicine Australia Extreme Heat guidelines



Fire seasons are forecast to start earlier and last longer.

Direct experience with a natural disaster has obvious impacts. Sometimes overlooked are the ongoing indirect impacts.

Direct

Directly experiencing a natural disaster such as a bushfire or flood, can affect our physical health through:

- Burns
- Heat stress
- Respiratory issues
- Injury
- Mortality

Indirect

Long-term consequences of experiencing a natural disaster include:

- Inability to continue employment
- Loss of livestock or crop
- Loss of local industry
- Loss of pets
- Loss of housing and home
- Reduced access to clean drinking water



Increases in annual temperatures and severe weather events

create a unique environment that increases food-borne, water-borne and mosquito-borne diseases

Direct

Direct contact with food-borne, water-borne or mosquito-borne diseases can result in:

- Illness
- Skin and wound infections
- Hospitalisation

Indirect

These types of diseases can also affect:

- Availability of clean drinking water
- Availability and access to nutritious food
- Increase mould growth in homes



Increases in annual temperatures and severe weather events coupled with decreased annual rainfall can have impacts on our crop growing patterns and drinking water reserves.

Direct

Having limited access to drinking water and healthy food can result in:

- Reduce access to a balanced and nutritious diet
- Dehydration

Indirect

These sorts of issues can then result in:

- Strain on local hospitals and emergency services
- Loss of livestock or crop
- Loss of local industry

Actions to care for your physical health in a changing climate



Walk and ride more

This can cut emissions and provide enormous health benefits through the increase of physical activity.



Look to support your local growers

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and local Farmers Markets are a great way to meet and support local growers, as well as increasing our consumption of fresh and nutritious fruit and vegetables.



Get out in the garden

Try growing your own food or establishing a neighbourhood food swap.



Move to a plant-based diet

Reducing consumption of red meat, fats and sugars can be good for our health and the environment.



Conduct a home energy and thermal audit

Creating climate ready homes by ensuring our homes are as thermally efficient as possible.



Create household/family plan

By having plans in place, the whole family knows what to do in case of an emergency. You can have Extreme Heat plan, Flood plans and Bushfire plans.



Cover up!

If outdoors after heavy rain in the warmer months, cover up with loose fitting clothing and have insect repellent handy.



Pick up the phone

Check-in with others.



Useful resources

CFA: Your Bushfire Plan www.cfa.vic.gov.au

Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group: Sustainable Homes mrsg.org.au

Sport Medicine Australia Extreme Heat guidelines sma.org.au

Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health sunburycobaw.org.au

Bendigo Health bendigohealth.org.au

References

1. Doctors for the Environment Australia (2021) How Climate Change Affects Youth Health: The Facts, dea.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/How-Climate-Change-Affects-Your-Health-August-2021.pdf
2. The Lancet (2021) The Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: code red for a healthy future, thelancet.com/countdown-health-climate
3. Sport Medicine Australia (2021) Extreme Heat Policy, sma.org.au/sma-site-content/uploads/2021/02/SMA-Extreme-Heat-Policy-2021-Final.pdf
4. Bendigo Health & Castlemaine Institute (2022) Climate Change and Health: Local pathways for action and evaluation, [Climate change and health 220714_final.pdf](#)



**Bridging
the Divide**

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Bridging the Divide workshop.

For more information about how you can manage climate change visit:
mrsc.vic.gov.au/Climate-Change

**Macedon
Ranges**
Shire Council

**CENTRAL VICTORIAN**
Primary Care Partnership