



Climate Change Harms the Health of Maine People

Climate Change Brings Unhealthy Air

Ground-level ozone “smog” triggers asthma attacks, harms those with lung diseases, and makes it difficult for healthy people to breathe, too. Heat is a major factor in the formation of ozone smog, so the more our climate warms, the more smog Maine is likely to experience. Breathing ozone can irritate eyes and throat, and damage lungs and airways. This leads to more emergency room visits and hospitalizations, less capacity for outdoor work and exercise, and an increase in the rate of premature deaths among vulnerable people like children, the elderly, and people who struggle with asthma. About one in nine Mainers suffers from asthma, which is among the highest asthma rates in the country.

Warmer summers extend Maine’s allergy season and increase the concentration of pollen in the air we breathe. This increases complications from hay fever and other allergies, and can increase the frequency of asthma attacks.

Maine has one of the highest rates of asthma in the country. Increased air pollution leads to more emergency room visits, hospitalization, and premature deaths for those with asthma, other respiratory illnesses, and our seniors.”

— Samantha Paradis, RN

Climate Change Brings More Damaging Storms, Rainfall, and Flooding

Flooded sewer and stormwater systems pollute Maine rivers and coastal waters, causing more water-borne diseases such as giardia. Every year, when storms overwhelm water treatment systems, hundreds of millions of gallons of stormwater mixed with raw sewage are discharged into local waterways. Such sewage flooding will become more frequent as climate change continues.

Rising seas from climate change batter Maine’s coast, buildings, and roads. Higher seas make flooding events worse, and make it more difficult for first responders to get to emergency scenes.



Climate Change Brings More Disease-carrying Insects

Maine's shorter and milder winters, coupled with longer warm seasons, generate more mosquitos and ticks, and the illnesses they carry. Maine is now the worst state in the country for tick-borne Lyme disease, with 1,787 reported cases in 2017, up from 175 cases in 2003. Lyme disease and other vector-borne illnesses, including life-threatening anaplasmosis and babesiosis are also on the rise.

“As a practicing Emergency Department physician with 40 years of experience in Maine, the rate of increase in tick-borne illness that I am seeing is truly alarming. With our warming climate, more ticks are surviving winter and emerging to feed earlier in the spring. These ticks carry with them a multitude of illnesses literally unheard of when I started practice.”

– Tony Owens, MD, Attending physician at the Department of Emergency Medicine at Maine Medical Center

Climate Change Brings More Extreme Heat Waves

Because of climate change, extreme heat waves will become more common and more intense in Maine. Heat waves disproportionately harm children, the elderly, and people in lower income households.

Emergency room visits for heat-related illnesses are expected to rise, along with hospitalizations for heart disease and diabetes, which are also made worse by hot weather.

For more information contact us at nrcm@nrcm.org, or visit www.nrcm.org/programs/federal.



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