Evolution Series
Twenty years of health equity innovation
Climate Justice

Taking Action on Climate Change for Health Guide 2: Health and Equity Co-Benefits of Addressing Climate Change
Climate change mitigation and readiness measures are being implemented in land use, transportation, water, energy, waste, agriculture, and more. Many climate action strategies also have significant beneficial effects on public health and equity, known as co-benefits, making climate change action a “win-win”. Some health co-benefits of strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation include: decreases in obesity, cardiovascular disease, respiratory illness, osteoporosis, and improved community cohesion and mental health. If efforts are targeted to those communities most in need of the resources, benefits, and reduction of risks resulting from climate change action, health inequities can also be addressed.

Unlike the longer term effects of climate change, health co-benefits can be seen locally and felt more immediately. Research has shown that describing the health consequences of climate change is compelling to the general public. Making the connection between health and climate change may help to broaden support for addressing climate change.

For these reasons, BARHII urges all public health staff to educate themselves on the connections between their work and climate change, to discuss these connections with the families and communities they serve, and to seek opportunities to integrate public health co-benefits with climate change actions, strategies, or policies. Health is a strong motivator for action, and as a health professional, your voice and opinion are powerful motivators for positive change!
When We Confront Climate Change, We CAN Impact Health

The table below shows several climate change strategies, potential changes to the physical and social environment resulting from these planning efforts, and the positive health outcomes associated with these changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Strategies to Address Climate Change</th>
<th>Potential Health Co-Benefits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Land Use</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>• Reduce vehicle miles traveled&lt;br&gt;• Manage local traffic (e.g. Safe Routes to School)&lt;br&gt;• Improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure&lt;br&gt;• Improve access to and cost of public transportation&lt;br&gt;• Use low carbon fuels and increase vehicle fuel efficiency</td>
<td>• Reduced traffic injuries and osteoporosis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land Use</td>
<td>• Increase density of housing and neighborhoods&lt;br&gt;• Increase availability of affordable housing&lt;br&gt;• Develop housing and jobs near public transit&lt;br&gt;• Encourage developments that have mixed-uses (e.g. retail with residential&lt;br&gt;• Increase green spaces in urban environments (e.g. parks, trees, open space)</td>
<td>• Increased local access to essential services (e.g. housing, jobs, schools)&lt;br&gt;• Reduced temperature and urban heat island health effects&lt;br&gt;• Reduced noise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased physical activity&lt;br&gt;• Reduced air pollution (e.g. reduced respiratory disease and cardiovascular disease)&lt;br&gt;• Reduced chronic disease (e.g. heart disease, asthma, cancer, diabetes)&lt;br&gt;• Improved opportunities to socialize&lt;br&gt;• Increased financial resources for use on other community resources&lt;br&gt;• Improved mental health&lt;br&gt;• Enhanced safety</td>
</tr>
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Food Production and Security

- Reduce food miles traveled
- Promote local agriculture
- Encourage less meat consumption
- Expand farmers markets and community/ backyard/ rooftop gardens

- Increased access to healthy, fresh food
- Reduced heart disease, obesity, and diabetes
- Reduced air pollution
- Increased local and social cohesion
- Increased resilience

Energy Efficiency

- Reduce residential and commercial building energy use
- Improve air quality (indoor and outdoor)

- Reduced household energy costs
- Healthy homes
- Local jobs in green sector
- Reduced heat-related death and illness

CLIMATE CO-BENEFITS
↓ 14% Carbon Emissions

HEALTH CO-BENEFITS
↓ 15% Cardiovascular Disease
↓ 5% Breast Cancer
↓ 15% Diabetes
↓ 10% Dementia

A simple shift from 4 to 22 minutes per day of walking and bicycling results in:

REFERENCES

