

## Risks for children

Children under the age of 5 experience the majority of the health burden from climate change, according to Salas' report.

Samantha Ahdoot, a pediatrician in Alexandria, Va., treated an 11-year-old and a 13-year-old who moved from Florida after a hurricane destroyed their community and their medical records at their doctor's office.

One needed surgery for a heart condition and had to start from scratch with a new cardiologist. Both had attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) that was harder to treat amid the major life disruption and without records on adjustments to medication dosages. Ahdoot, who also founded the group Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action, said she has seen an influx of families moving because of weather disasters.

## Dehydration and kidney problems

Much hotter days make it harder to stay hydrated. They are linked with electrolyte imbalances, kidney stones and kidney failure. Patients who need dialysis as their kidneys fail can have trouble getting treatment during extreme weather events.

## Skin disease

Higher temperatures and the depletion of the ozone layer increase the risk of skin cancer. The same refrigerants and gases that damage the ozone layer contribute to climate change.

## Digestive illnesses

Heat is linked with higher risks for salmonella and campylobacter outbreaks. Extreme rains can contaminate drinking water. Harmful algae blooms that thrive in higher temperatures can cause gastrointestinal problems, too.

## Infectious disease

Changing temperature and rainfall patterns allow some insects spread farther and transmit malaria, dengue, Lyme disease and West Nile virus. Waterborne cholera and cryptosporidiosis increase with drought and flooding.

## Mental health conditions

The American Psychological Association created a 69-page

### About this story:

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guide on how climate change can induce stress, depression and anxiety. The group says "the connections with mental health are often not part" of the climate-health discussion.

People exposed to or displaced by extreme weather or violent conflict are at higher risk for mental health challenges. Extreme heat can also make some mental illnesses worse.

The University of Maryland's Howard Center for Investigative Journalism found emergency calls relating to psychiatric conditions increased about 40 percent in Baltimore in summer 2018, when the heat index surged above 103 degrees, as reported on NPR.

And some psychotropic medications interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature—increasing vulnerability to heat.

## Neurological disease

Fossil fuel pollution can increase the risk of stroke. Coal combustion also produces mercury—a neurotoxin for fetuses. Diseases spread by mosquitoes and ticks increase the chance of neurological problems. Extreme heat is also linked with cerebrovascular disease, a disorder that affects blood supply to the brain.

## Nutrition

Carbon dioxide emissions are lowering the nutritional density of food crops, reducing plant levels of protein, zinc and iron and leading to more nutritional deficiencies. Food supplies are also disrupted by drought, societal instability and inequity linked with climate change.

## Trauma

Extreme weather events, including hurricanes, floods and wildfires, often cause physical injuries. Doctors see minor fractures, crush injuries and smoke inhalation. Extreme heat is also linked with aggression and violence, and the climate crisis globally is connected with violent conflict and forced migration. □

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