

2020 National Public Health Week: Environmental Health



Environmental Health

Human, animal and environmental health are interconnected, such that the chemical and environmental exposures that constitute the air, water, soil, and food that surround us impact our wellbeing.

The Impact of the Environment on Health

- Environment-related illnesses include cancer, heart disease, diabetes, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), obesity, occupational injuries, arthritis, Parkinson's disease, malaria, dysentery, and depression.ⁱ
- Contaminated drinking water and poor hygiene practices are responsible for many infectious diseases, including schistosomiasis, diarrhea, cholera, meningitis, and gastritis.ⁱ
- Climate change constitutes a health emergency – from exposure to extreme weather and heat waves to worsening air pollution and the spread of insect-borne disease.ⁱⁱ



Maine's Environment

- Warmer temperatures and shorter winters are causing ticks to come out of hibernation earlier and to [move further north](#), resulting in an increase in Lyme disease. According to the [Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#), from 2001-2018, the incidence rate of Lyme disease in Maine (per 100,000 people) increased from 8.4 to 105.1.
- According to the [American Lung Association's State of the Air Report](#) (2020), in Maine, 120,932 adults and 20,225 children have asthma.
- In 2017, there were more than 13,000 emergency department visits because of COPD exacerbations.ⁱⁱⁱ

Take Action

- Work with local and state-wide organizations that work to protect Maine's environment and preserve our oceans, lakes, rivers, and forests.
- Ask your legislators to support policies that help mitigate climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Advocate for increased funding to improve our water infrastructure and adequate funding to support public health workers in monitoring, preparing for and responding to the health effects of climate change.
- Advocate for equitable solutions for low-income populations and communities of color that have disproportionate access to clean air, water, and green spaces.
- Follow and support the work of the [Maine Climate Council](#).

Maine Resources

- [Maine Department of Environmental Protection](#): Sustainability Notifications, Reporting, and Alerts
- [Maine Environmental Priorities Coalition](#): A partnership of 30+ conservation and public health organizations that represent 100,000+ members who want to protect the good health, good jobs, and quality of life that our environment provides.
- [Maine Climate Council](#): The Maine Climate Council is charged with developing a plan to meet state greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets that are now in law, including a gross 45% greenhouse gas emissions reduction below 1990 levels by 2030 and at least 80% by 2050.

ⁱ Resnik, DB. & Portier, CJ. (n.d.). Environment, Ethics, and Human Health. <https://www.thehastingscenter.org/briefingbook/environmental-health>.

ⁱⁱ American Public Health Association. 2020. Climate change. <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/climate-change>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Troutman, C. 2018. Report on air quality in Maine has environmentalists concerned. <https://www.mainepublic.org/post/report-air-quality-maine-has-environmentalists-concerned>.