



The Health of a Planet

Film Discussion Guide

Photo Credit: Simon Smith

Film Summary

“The Health of a Planet” is one of four short films highlighting the impacts of climate change on human health in Montana. This film explores how healthcare providers can help their patients understand the impacts of climate change on their health.

Pre-Film Discussion

Before watching this film, consider the following:

- a) Are you familiar with ways that climate change can impact human health?
- b) Have you, or someone you know, had their health impacted by climate change?
- c) As a medical professional, can you identify how climate change has impacted your patients? Do you talk to your patients about the health impacts of climate change?

Post-Film Discussion

- ~ Why is it important for healthcare professionals to talk to their patients about how climate change events can impact their health?
- ~ What challenges do healthcare providers face when trying to discuss climate change and health with patients?
- ~ In what ways can healthcare professionals support patients and their communities in the event of health-impacting climate surprises?
- ~ What are some ways in which health systems could work to reduce their own climate impact?
- ~ The film focuses on health impacts from wildfire smoke. What are other ways that climate change (hotter days, flood, drought) can impact the health of people in your geographical region?
- ~ Aside from solutions mentioned in the film, in what other ways can healthcare professionals and health systems work to better educate and treat patients, and prevent impacts of climate change?



Please see back for additional information

Climate Change and Human Health in Montana

The 2017 Montana Climate Assessment states that Montana has high summer temperatures (many days over 90F), an increase in size and frequency of wildfires (poor air quality from smoke), and more unexpected weather events (more springtime flooding, severe summer drought and extreme storms)¹. This can result in increased respiratory illnesses, G.I. disorders, vector-borne diseases, allergies and asthma, heat-related illnesses, preterm labor, and stress and mental illness, along with impacts on water resources and food security.

What should health professionals prepare for²?

- Respiratory illness caused by heat and wildfire smoke
- Heat-related illness resulting in heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and other illnesses
- Increases in stress and mental health, especially for those whose livelihoods depend on the land (ranching/agricultural community)
- More allergies/ asthma due to longer, warmer growing seasons and increases in pollen
- G.I. disease from springtime floods that result in contaminated water
- Increased food and water insecurity from drought (decreases in water supply), and resulting impacts on food availability and nutritional quality
- More in pre-term labor and low birthweight from poor air quality and excessive heat.
- Increases in vector-borne disease from stagnant water caused by summer drought

Recommendations for Healthcare Providers and Health Care Institutions

- Work to create an adequately funded and coordinated public health network.
- Improve data collection and sharing. Add qualifiers to electronic medical records to diagnose when heat and smoke affect a condition.
- Hold trainings for healthcare professionals about climate change and human health.
- Utilize and analyze trends in data to better understand the impact of climate events on human health, and improve our understanding and response.
- Prepare for climate emergencies and be part of the solution by committing to sustainability in your healthcare facility.
- Encourage providers to talk with their patients and work with community groups and professional societies on climate change and health.

Resources

- [National League of Cities, Climate for Health](#) website
- Join [Montana Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate](#)
- Visit [My Green Doctor](#) and [Practice Green Health](#) for tips on facility sustainability.
- **Healthcare Institutions:** Apply to be a Network Organization for the [National Academy of Medicine's Action Collaborative on Decarbonizing the U.S. Health Sector](#).
- See the National Academy of Medicine's: [Grand Challenge on Climate Change, Human Health and Equity](#)
- **Public Health Departments:** See the [CDC's BRACE framework](#)
- Enroll in the University of Montana's: [Climate Change & Human Health in Montana free online course](#)
- See the C2H2 report, Chapters [2- Climate Change and Human Health in Montana](#), [3- Climate Related Health Impacts](#), and [5-Climate Health Action](#)

¹ [The 2017 Montana Climate Assessment](#)

² [Climate Change and Human Health in Montana: A Special Report of the Montana Climate Assessment](#)