

Climate Change, Health and Equity: Talking Points

Physicians play a critical role in leading efforts to combat climate change at personal, community and policy levels. These talking points can be used to deliver short (5-10 minute) presentations about climate change in your community, for example at meetings of various civic groups, such as your local churches, school boards, city council and men's or women's clubs.

Begin by introducing yourself, your medical society and NMA affiliation and a one sentence overview of your talk. For example, *"Today I will be sharing with you three important points about climate change: how it negatively affects our health, how communities of color are especially impacted, and what we can do together to make change."*

Climate change is real and has serious health effects

- 97% of climate scientists agree that climate change is happening **NOW** and is primarily driven by human activity.
- A recent survey by National Medical Association shows that 88% of African American physicians have patients who are already affected by climate change.
- Health impacts of climate change include:
 - Heat illness and complications for heart, lung and kidney disease from worsening heat events.
 - Worse asthma and allergies from poor air quality and longer, stronger allergy seasons.
 - Poor mental health from the stress of climate change impacts
 - Spread of insect-borne diseases like Zika virus, Lyme disease and West Nile virus.

Communities of color are disproportionately impacted by climate change drivers and impacts.

- 68% of African Americans live within 30 miles of a coal plant (compared to 56% of whites), and almost 50% of all U.S. Latinos live in the nation's most ozone-polluted cities.¹
- Low income communities and communities of color are more likely to be located in dense urban areas with fewer trees, less green space, higher energy use and more asphalt & concrete. These vulnerabilities correspond to areas of historical segregation and create dangerous "urban heat islands."

There is good news: we can do a lot to stop climate change and protect our health

- **Take personal action:** reduce your energy use at home & work and drive less in more fuel efficient vehicles to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases from power plants and automobiles.
- **Get involved in your community:** plant trees, shrubs, and community gardens to reduce carbon dioxide and urban heat retention; ask for more bike lanes and sidewalks to reduce vehicle use.
- **Use your voice:** Tell your local, state, and federal officials that you are concerned about climate change and its health impacts. Ask them to take action, like supporting the Clean Power Plan, to reduce pollution from power plants.



For More Information

- A Physician's Guide to Climate Change, Health and Equity:
<http://climatehealthconnect.org/resources/physicians-guide-climate-change-health-equity/>

¹ National Resources Defense Council. U.S. Latinos and Air Pollution: A call to action. September 2011. Available at <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/LatinoAirReport.pdf>