

[Click here to download the Human Health chapter from the report](#) KEY MESSAGES:

- Significant increases in the risk of illness and death related to extreme heat and heat waves are very likely. Some reduction in the risk of death related to extreme cold is expected.
- Warming is likely to make it more challenging to meet air quality standards necessary to protect human health.
- Extreme weather events cause physical and mental health problems. Some of these events are projected to increase.
- Some diseases transmitted by food, water, and insects are likely to increase.
- Rising temperature and carbon dioxide concentration increase pollen production and prolong the pollen season in a number of plants with highly allergenic pollen, presenting a health risk.
- Certain groups, including children, the elderly, and the poor, are most vulnerable to a range of climate-related health effects.

Projected Increase in Heat-Related Deaths in Chicago

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Climate change poses unique challenges to human health. Unlike health threats caused by a particular toxin or disease pathogen, there are many ways that climate change can lead to potentially harmful health effects. There are direct health impacts from heat waves and severe storms, ailments caused or exacerbated by air pollution and airborne allergens, and many climate-sensitive infectious diseases.

Realistically assessing the potential health effects of climate change must include consideration of the capacity to manage new and changing climate conditions. Whether or not increased health risks due to climate change are realized will depend largely on societal responses and underlying vulnerability. The probability of exacerbated health risks due to climate change points to a need to maintain a strong public health infrastructure to help limit future impacts.

Increased risks associated with diseases originating outside the United States must also be considered because we live in an increasingly globalized world. Many poor nations are expected to suffer even greater health consequences from climate change. With global trade and travel, disease flare-ups in any part of the world can potentially reach the United States. In addition, weather and climate extremes such as severe storms and drought can undermine public health infrastructure, further stress environmental resources, destabilize economies, and potentially create security risks both within the United States and internationally.

