

NEWSLETTER

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EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS BROUGHT ON BY CLIMATE CHANGE, SUCH AS HEAT WAVES, FIRES, STORMS, FLOODS, DROUGHTS, AND COLD SNAPS, HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE SENIOR POPULATION.

- For a variety of reasons, older people are more susceptible to harsh weather occurrences
- Seniors may require assistance with daily tasks and medical care, making them more vulnerable when services are disrupted
- Older adults are experiencing the distressing intersection of climate change and geriatric mental health

KEY INFORMATION

- High temperatures increase the risk of cognitive deterioration in dementia patients and increase likelihood of being hospitalized
- People with pre-existing illnesses like cardiovascular disease, hypertension, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and chronic kidney disease are particularly at risk for heightened disease complications.
- psychiatric conditions like Parkinson's or Alzheimer's result in physical manifestations like movement disorders or bodily weakness that make emergency evacuations challenging or impossible



Scan QR code or click link below

<https://app.chalenj.com/ctoken/rTxLdrjKBiW24OwVTn6LudZd7Nginbq1hA3JcDfk>

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHALENJ

- Extreme event challenges
- Water related illnesses
- Respiratory effects
- Mental health effects
- Heat illnesses
- Signs & symptoms to know
- Prevention tips

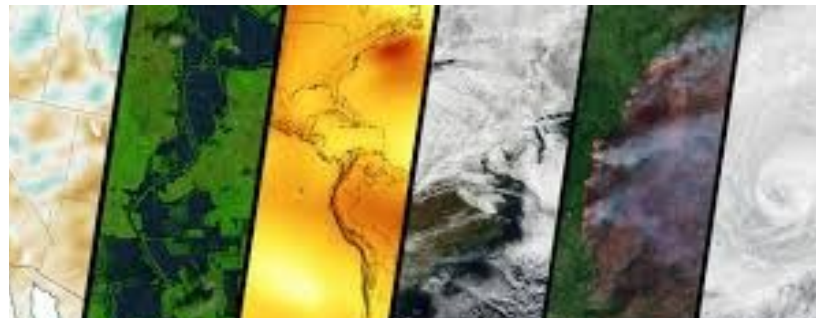


EXTREME EVENT CHALLENGES

Climate change is among the greatest long-term threats facing Canada and the world, and the increased frequency of severe weather events potentially threaten life and property.

Elderly people may be vulnerable not only at the start of extreme weather, but also during and after it. During extreme weather events, those with limited mobility may have difficulty caring for themselves, getting help, or even getting to safety.

According to a report prepared for Toronto Public Health by the Clean Air Partnership, since many seniors live on fixed incomes, it may be harder for them to cover the costs associated with natural hazards, which could include medical bills and housing repairs, and an increase in insurance costs as well.



Severe weather can develop quickly and include events such as:

- storm surges
- high winds
- forest fires
- power outages – from severe weather patterns
- blizzards
- hail
- heavy rain
- ice storms
- thunderstorms

Extreme events can also disrupt medical care, making it difficult for people to get access to the right medications, medical records, and even prevent them from getting access to necessary health equipment or medical care.

Power outages following a storm can also affect elevators, air conditioning or heat, and electronically powered medical equipment, putting older people at risk.

The National Institute on Aging has prepared a list of 6 Tips on How Older Adults Can Prepare for a Disaster.



<https://www.nia.nih.gov/sites/default/files/disaster-preparedness-infographic-508.pdf>

Read more on the health impacts of climate change here



<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

Click on the image to watch a video on how climate change is disrupting our world today...



What effects of climate change have you witnessed or experienced?



WATER RELATED ILLNESSES

Older people are more likely to get gastrointestinal or other infections from untreated polluted water since many have weakened immune systems. For older persons, water-related illnesses can frequently be more severe and occasionally result in long-term illness or even death.

Harmful algal blooms may become more common due to climate change and as a result endanger drinking and recreational water sources.

People with chronic respiratory conditions, particularly asthma, are more susceptible to respiratory ailments and eye discomfort from swimming in waters with toxic algal blooms.

Take charge of what you can control; be sure to always have bottled water on hand and be sure your tap water is safe for consumption before drinking.



The effects of climate change on the land, the soil, the agricultural land, the atmosphere, and even water resources are numerous.

There have already been a few water related changes:

variations in air and ocean temperatures
longer and heavier rainfalls
flooding
rising sea levels

Public Health Ontario suggests contacting the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks at 1-800-565-4923 or 416-325-4000 with questions about drinking water

RESPIRATORY EFFECTS

Climate change has caused many changes in the world we live in, some of which are detrimental to the respiratory system. **Some of the changes observed include:**

- earlier warm weather in the spring
- rising temperatures
- changes in precipitation
- increased carbon dioxide concentrations

The above changes have increased the length and severity of the pollen season which can impair lung function. It can aggravate pre-existing respiratory problems and may contribute to the development of asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Forest fires have increased in number and severity due to the rising temperatures caused by climate change. Older adults are especially vulnerable to the health effects of smoke exposure due to pre-existing lung and cardiovascular disease, as well as declining immunity with age.

It is important to note that the respiratory system is affected not only outdoors but, in some cases, indoors. Older buildings and those with poor ventilation may put residents at greater risk of exposure to indoor air pollutants such as bacteria and mold caused by water damage.



TIPS

Gather supplies such as food, water, clothing, medications, batteries, and chargers to assemble a disaster kit

Potential places to get relief from extreme heat may include local community centers, swimming pools, libraries, shopping centers and other places that are air conditioned.

MENTAL HEALTH EFFECTS

Hurricanes, floods, and wildfires are examples of extreme weather occurrences that affect both the environment and the human spirit. One in four seniors in Canada live alone. Due to this, individuals are particularly at risk during severe weather, especially if they can no longer access their regularly used resources.

As it has had an influence on communities all around the world, climate change has also had an impact on mental health. Professor Robin Cox of Royal Roads University in Victoria, BC., claims that anxiety can be brought on by extreme weather occurrences and climate change. Even the long-term effects of air pollution on elderly persons' cognitive deterioration have been related.

Extreme and natural weather events brought on by climate change have a psychological impact on the elderly and the most vulnerable people. Stress, depression, and other mental health issues can get worse during an uncontrollable heat wave, fire, or flood.

Even those who are not directly affected by the situation could nonetheless be affected.



Canadian Red Cross

The Canadian Red Cross shares the signs and symptoms of heat-related emergencies.

Learn more by exploring the following links:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00003-eng.htm>

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/checkup/how-is-the-b-c-flooding-disaster-affecting-you-1.6256813/extreme-weather-events-can-affect-mental-health-even-from-afar-1.6257492>

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00074/full>

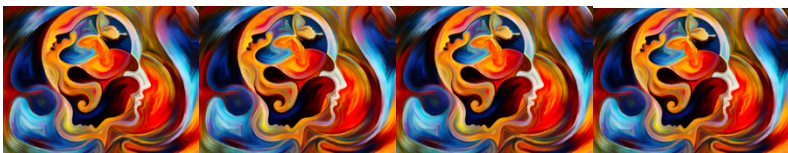
<https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/sfttps/index-en.aspx>

https://app.chalenj.com/storage/app/public/public/tasks/1055_1673620069-red_cross_signs.jpg

https://app.chalenj.com/public/storage/public/tasks/1055_1673620796-extreme-heat-brochure-its-way-too-hot-en.pdf

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

Have you prepared a list of emergency contacts? If not, who would you want to include on that list and where will it be kept?



Do you know somewhere you can go to escape or avoid the heat?



HEAT ILLNESSES

Heat waves and temperature increases brought on by climate change all continue to have a significant negative impact on the morbidity and mortality of the elderly.

Pre-existing medical disorders and prescription drugs may impair the body's reaction to heat and cold leaving older persons at increased risk even from slight temperature increases.

Heat diseases may also develop when a person is subjected to elevated temperatures and their body is unable to cool down; older people often have a challenging time responding to temperature fluctuations which adds to their overall vulnerability.

Health Canada has developed a fact sheet highlighting symptoms of heat related illnesses, including:

- Heat cramps: painful muscle cramps, usually in the legs or abdomen
- Heat edema: swelling of hands, feet, and ankles
- Heat exhaustion: heavy sweating, weakness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, fainting
- Heat stroke: headache, dizziness, confusion or other altered mental state and fainting; skin may be hot and dry, or the person may sweat due to high body temperature; this is a potentially fatal medical emergency



THREE STEPS TO COST-EFFECTIVE HOME HEAT PROTECTION

Step 1: Plan ahead to keep cool

Do-it-yourself, \$0



1 Help schedule neighbours, family, friends prepare and arrange to check in during heat events.



2 Sign up for heat alerts on your phone (e.g., BlackOutCall).



3 Learn how to best use windows and doors to naturally ventilate your home, particularly at night.



4 Choose energy efficient lights and appliances that produce less "waste" heat.



5 Temporarily arrange to work or sleep in cooler rooms (e.g. basement).

Step 2: Complete simple upgrades

Do-it-yourself, for under \$250



1 Plant and maintain shade trees, especially along south, east and west facing walls.*



2 Grow plants along your walls and on decks and balconies.*



3 Improve home insulation and air tightness (e.g., draft excluders).



4 Install blinds, heat-resistant curtains, or films on windows.



5 Use portable or ceiling fans that increase air circulation.

Step 3: Complete more complex upgrades

Work with a contractor, for over \$250



1 Convert paved areas to vegetation which absorbs less heat and more water.*



2 Install a green (vegetated) or reflective roof.*



3 Shade windows with outdoor shutters and awnings.



4 Install windows and doors that have a low Solar Heat Gain Coefficient (let less heat in).



5 Install and maintain a heat pump or air conditioning unit.

* See local advice on appropriate native species, and, in places at risk of wildfire, consider FireSmart guidance.

INTACT CENTRE
ON CLIMATE ADAPTATION



Scan the code or click the link for additional resources at www.intactcentre.ca



Click on the infographic above for home protection tips!



PREVENTION TIPS

The list below gives a few tips to prevent heat related illnesses:

- Stay hydrated,
 - even if you don't feel thirsty; aim for 12 cups of water a day
 - Check the weather before going out
 - minimize exposure to heat and smog
 - Dress for the heat
 - loose-fitting, light-coloured, breathable clothing, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses
 - Stay in the shade when possible
 - Keep your home cool
 - use air conditioning or fans and keep window coverings closed
 - Talk to your doctor or pharmacist
 - many medications can increase the risk of heat-related illness
 - Check on others
 - make sure they are safe on hot days
 - Know the signs of heat-related illnesses
 - headache; nausea; dizziness, weakness or feeling faint; skin that is moist, or redder or paler than usual; rapid, shallow breathing; and irritable, aggressive, or bizarre behaviour
- Seek medical attention when needed.