



Climate Change and Human Health – Making the Link

Climate change is happening and experts believe it is adversely impacting global human health. As a health care company with a commitment to “Working together for a healthier world”[®], we at Pfizer are concerned about these health impacts.

Increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHGs), primarily carbon dioxide, are causing global temperatures to rise, thus resulting in climate change. Scientists agree that this change in climate will adversely impact human health in many ways¹. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), extreme weather, flooding and changes in disease patterns are just some of the ways climate change will negatively affect health around the world, particularly, though not exclusively, in developing countries.² Industry, governments and the public all have a responsibility to address this evolving global health and environmental challenge. Directly, Pfizer’s contributions include supporting climate change science and voluntarily reducing GHG emissions. Indirectly, our efforts around neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) and our continued commitment to improve access to medicines contribute to the secondary effects of a changing climate.

The WHO’s reports on the potential impacts of climate change on public health, “Protecting Health from Climate Change – World Health Day 2008” and its 2009 report, “Protecting health from climate change: connecting science, policy and people”, describe the adverse impacts climate change currently is having and is expected to continue to have on human health, including:

- More frequent extreme heat waves and associated air quality issues contribute to and exacerbate **cardiovascular and respiratory diseases**.
 - o For example, the high heat seen in Europe during the summer of 2003 resulted in an estimate of more than 70,000 excess deaths.
- Floods, droughts and contaminated water raises the risk of **diarrhoeal disease**
 - o Almost 90% of the burden of diarrhoeal diseases is attributable to lack of access to safe water and sanitation and remains one of the biggest killers of children.

¹IPCC, Fourth Assessment Report, “Working Group II Report: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability”, 2007.

²World Health Organization, “Climate Change and Human Health – Risks and Responses, Summary”, 2003

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- Changes in temperature, rainfall, humidity, flooding and other climatic conditions creates an opportunity for the spread of vector borne infectious diseases such as **malaria, dengue and others**.
 - o Malaria is responsible for the deaths of over 1 million people annually and is influenced by warmer temperature, higher humidity and availability of freshwater breeding sites for the disease carrying mosquitoes.
 - o Dengue is also highly dependant on climate and cases of the disease have risen dramatically in the last 40 years. Studies suggest that climate change could expose an additional 2 billion people to the disease by the 2080's.
 - o Controlling infectious diseases that are transmitted by contaminated food and water and insect vectors (such as malaria, dengue, and cholera) will become more difficult and progress that has been made against many of these diseases may be halted or reversed.
- Negative impacts to agricultural productivity threaten increasing malnutrition which makes populations more susceptible and can increase the severity of many infectious diseases, especially in children.
- Increase in the severity and frequency of storms and flooding could potentially destroy homes, medical facilities other services and could displace communities.

As a leading science based health company, Pfizer believes that climate change is a global environmental and public health issue that requires more action on the part of industry, the government and the public.

The importance of climate transparency and disclosure to Pfizer was recently formalized in our "[Climate Change Position Statement](#)".