

Talk to Your Patients about Water-related Health Impacts

Accessible link: <https://www.cdc.gov/climate-health/index.html>

Rising temperatures, changes in precipitation, drought, and rising sea levels threaten water quality and availability. These factors can contaminate water sources and adversely impact drinking water treatment and supply systems. They can also increase concentrations of pathogens and other contaminants, increase the occurrence of waterborne illnesses, create favorable conditions for harmful algal blooms (HABs), and increase risks of saltwater contamination.^{1, 24} Review this information and share with your patients.



Takeaways for Healthcare Providers, Hospitals, and Clinics

- Following extreme precipitation events, you should prepare for increases in diarrheal illnesses and health effects due to chemical contamination of drinking water.²⁵
- Develop protocols to test for and report waterborne illnesses. These can curb morbidity and mortality during water contamination events.²⁶
- Educate yourself on the symptoms of exposure to harmful algal blooms (HABs). Routes of exposure to cyanobacteria and cyanotoxins in water include ingestion, inhalation, and skin contact.^{27, 28} Commonly reported symptoms include blisters, rashes, nausea, vomiting, weakness, and fatigue.²⁸
- If safe water supply is limited, give patients access to portable filters and bottled water to prevent or reduce waterborne illness.

Advice for Your Patients

1. Educate patients on the symptoms of waterborne illness.²⁹
2. Inform patients on how to make drinking water safe in an emergency: use water filters or bottled water, boil water, and disinfect water using unscented, household bleach during emergencies.³⁰
3. Endorse responsible fertilizer use and septic systems operation and maintenance to prevent or reduce the risk of HABs in the community.²⁸
4. Urge patients to avoid visiting bodies of water that have ongoing harmful algal blooms.²⁸

Populations at Greater Risk¹

- Infants and children
- Adults over 65 years old
- People who live or work near water hazards
- People with limited access to resources or infrastructure
- People experiencing homelessness
- Rural populations
- People with lower incomes
- People living in mobile homes



Climate Change Medical Factsheets Footnotes

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