




How the **Climate and Environment** Can Affect Your Health

Information for People with High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

Environmental hazards like extreme temperatures and air pollution are becoming worse due to climate change. There are steps people with hypertension should take to protect themselves.

How do the climate and environment affect people with hypertension?

Extreme Heat 	Cold Weather 	Air Pollution 
Puts stress on the heart and kidneys, and can lead to organ failure.	Causes blood vessels to narrow, which can raise your blood pressure.	Damages the blood vessels, causing them to become harder and narrower, and can even trigger heart attacks and strokes.

These and extreme weather events like hurricanes, heat waves, floods, and wildfires create **increased stress and anxiety** which can cause blood pressure to rise.

Steps to protect your heart from heat

- **Make a plan of where to stay cool.** Air conditioned homes, libraries, or cooling stations organized by your city or town can all be safe spaces.
- **Sign up for weather warnings.** Scan the QR code on this page to download the **Heat Safety App** to get local temperatures, humidity, warnings, and first aid information for heat illness.
- **Protect yourself on hot days.** Drink plenty of water, even if you are not thirsty. If you are working in hot conditions, set up shaded rest areas, take breaks in the shade, and drink water.
- **Know the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke and when to seek medical attention.**
 - **Heat Exhaustion** – go to a clinic or Emergency Room if you have fainting or dizziness, heavy sweating, headache, nausea or vomiting, light-headedness, weakness, thirst, decreased urine output, and/or muscle cramps.
 - **Heat Stroke** – call 911 if you have confusion, slurred speech, red, hot, dry skin or heavy sweating, very high body temperature, seizures, and/or loss of consciousness.

Steps to protect your heart from cold

- **Dress for the cold.** Wear layers, a hat, gloves, and warm socks. Your heart will not have to work as hard to keep your body warm.
- **Limit outdoor activity.** Move exercise inside. If you have to shovel snow or do physical work outside, take frequent breaks and go inside to warm up if possible.



Steps to protect your heart from air pollution

- **Know when and where pollution levels may be unhealthy.** Air pollution can be worse near busy roads and industrial areas. Air pollution levels are high when there is smoke in the air from wildfires, burning leaves, or wood stoves.
- **Check the Air Quality Index (AQI) for your zip code.** The index provides six color-coded categories that show different levels of health concern for air pollution levels. Check the AQI by scanning the QR code on the next page to download the **AirNow app** to your phone.
- **Plan activities when and where pollution levels are lower.** When particle levels outdoors are unhealthy, delay outdoor activities until the air is cleaner or move the activity indoors.

When the air is smoky from wildfires, reduce your exposure by following these tips:

DO:

- Set your car A/C to recirculate to keep smoke out.
- Close windows and doors in your home.
- Use a portable air cleaner with HEPA filters. Choose one that does not generate ozone.
- Use a N-95 mask if you need to be outdoors.

DON'T:

- DON'T play or exercise outside.
- DON'T vacuum (it can stir up dust).
- DON'T fry or broil foods, which can add particles to indoor air.
- DON'T use a fireplace or gas stove.
- DON'T smoke.

Ways to contribute to healthier air and climate

- **Walk, bike, or take public transportation** when possible.
- **Do not idle your vehicle** for any longer than necessary, if you are using a car.
- **Reduce fossil fuel consumption** by using LED lights and energy-efficient appliances, weatherizing your home to reduce energy use, and switching to renewable energy like solar. Contact Mass Save at 866-527-7283 for a free home energy assessment and to explore financial options. Learn more at www.masssave.com/en/residential
- **Eat a healthy, balanced diet with plenty of plant-based foods** instead of meat. **Reduce food waste and consider composting** instead of throwing away food scraps.



Visit www.challiance.org/hypertension to learn more, or scan the QR code.