

# Talk to Your Patients about Mental Health and Wellbeing

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

Climate change is associated with negative mental health effects, including depression, anxiety, and suicidality. Negative mental health can be caused by stressors such as the increased frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events. These events can cause repeated trauma, displacement, and loss of livelihoods.<sup>1</sup> Review this information and share with your patients.

## Takeaways for Healthcare Providers, Hospitals, and Clinics

- Mental health screening, particularly among children, can help you quantify the burden of disease and identify patients at risk.<sup>8, 38, 39</sup>
- Expand mental health services through patient outreach, mobile health services, and peer support groups. These can improve community resilience before, during, and after natural disasters.<sup>19, 38, 39</sup>
- Shifts in agricultural or subsistence harvests impact the physical and mental health of farmers, ranchers, and Indigenous community members.<sup>34</sup>
- To improve mental health, address existing disparities in mental health services and develop culturally competent support services in collaboration with local and tribal communities.<sup>40</sup>
- First responders and healthcare providers also experience stress when aiding in natural disasters. Use coping techniques like taking breaks, eating healthy foods, exercising, and using the buddy system to partner with another responder to regularly check in with. These can help prevent and reduce burnout and secondary traumatic stress.<sup>41</sup>

## Advice for Your Patients

Advise patients to take care of their mental health by

1. connecting with others,
2. taking breaks,
3. avoiding too much exposure to the news, and
4. seeking help from others.<sup>42</sup>

If distress impacts daily life of your patients for several days or weeks, tell them to talk to a trusted person in their life, or contact the SAMHSA helpline at 1-800-985-5990.<sup>41</sup>



## Populations at Greater Risk<sup>1, 43</sup>

- Infants and children
- Pregnant women
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)\*
- People with disabilities
- People with mental health conditions
- People with chronic health conditions
- People with lower incomes
- People experiencing homelessness
- Outdoor workers
- Farmers
- Rural populations
- First responders

\* BIPOC refers to racial and ethnic communities, such as Black, Indigenous, Asian, Latino/Hispanic, and Middle Eastern



# Climate Change Medical Factsheets Footnotes

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