

Children drink more water for their weight than their parents and so are at higher risk from contaminated water. They are also more likely than adults to absorb dangerous contaminants through their skin while swimming or bathing.

If there is a "boil water" advisory, follow all instructions carefully. Look for water quality advisories at local beaches and swim only when and where the water is safe. If your child develops stomach cramps, diarrhea, vomiting or skin rashes, consult a doctor.

## Are you doing your bit?

**You** can help reduce the effects of climate change! Every time we turn on a light, hop in a car, use our computers, or do anything that uses energy, we are contributing to climate change. In fact, actions by individual Canadians account for 28% of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions - almost 5 tons per person.

### What can YOU do?

#### Cut back your use of energy!

- Car pool, cycle, walk or use public transportation
- Buy fuel efficient cars
- Insulate and seal leaks in your house to reduce energy use and save on your heating bill
- Turn down the heat in winter (20 °C or less).
- Raise the temperature on the air conditioner in hot weather (about 25 °C).
- Buy energy efficient appliances - check out the energy rating before you buy
- Turn off lights, televisions and other appliances when not in use
- Use less hot water. Turn down your hot water tank to 55°C and wash your clothes in cold water
- Install low flow showerheads and faucet aerators - these can reduce your water consumption significantly
- Wherever possible, use recycled materials
- Plant trees. Trees remove carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas) from the air and protect your home from wind and sun
- Use a push-style lawnmower

*This publication does not necessarily represent the views of the Government of Canada.*

*Cette brochure est également disponible en français.*

To learn more about the impacts of climate change on your children's health, visit the Canadian Institute of Child Health website at [www.cich.ca](http://www.cich.ca)

For more information about climate change and what you can do, visit the

Government of Canada climate change website at [www.climatechange.gc.ca](http://www.climatechange.gc.ca) or call 1-800-O-Canada (1-800-622-6232)



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Canada



CLIMATE  
CHANGE  
AND YOUR  
CHILD'S  
HEALTH

## How is the climate changing?

In our air there are gases that act like a blanket around the planet. They keep heat trapped in our atmosphere. These are called "greenhouse gases" because they act like a greenhouse to hold in the heat. Without these gases, the temperature on earth would drop from an average of 15°C to a frosty minus 18°C! Greenhouse gases are created naturally here on earth - the water vapour that produces clouds and rainfall, the carbon dioxide that we exhale when we breathe or the methane gas that is created by microorganisms living in the stomachs of cows and in swamps.

About a hundred and fifty years ago, we began to burn more fossil fuels (oil, coal and natural gas) to power and heat our factories, trains, ships, trucks, cars, buildings and homes. Burning these fuels releases greenhouse gases. Our addiction to fossil fuels adds billions of tons of extra greenhouse gases to the atmosphere every year. This is like throwing an extra blanket on the bed - it traps in more heat and warms up what's underneath - the earth!

## But I LIKE warm weather!

During Canada's cold winter, who wouldn't welcome some heat! But this heat is costly. Already temperatures in Canada are rising. **Scientists predict that over the next century, our children and grandchildren will live in a country that is 1.5°C - 5°C warmer in Southern Canada and as much as 5°C - 7°C warmer in the north.** This increase will alter the familiar patterns of our weather. That could mean all sorts of changes that will affect the health of you, me and our children.

## How will the health of our children be affected?

Many effects of climate change have the potential to have serious impacts on the health of our children. They are more in danger from extreme heat, and air and water pollution that may become worse with a warmer climate. Children are also more at risk from the storms, floods and droughts that may become more common.

## How soon will climate change affect our children?

To some children, the threats posed by climate change are already very real. Remember the Red River Floods in Manitoba in the spring of 1997 and the 1998 ice storms in Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec? These are examples (along with heavy thunderstorms, tornadoes, hurricanes and droughts) of some of the extreme weather events that are likely to become more frequent with global warming.

Many children already suffer from respiratory diseases like asthma. Hospital admissions related to breathing problems in children have risen dramatically over the past decade. Longer summers and hotter weather will make the conditions that affect these problems much worse.



## What can we expect?

### Extreme weather events

Really bad weather such as heavy rains, floods, tornadoes, ice storms and droughts, along with all the associated dangers and damage, are likely to occur more often as the climate changes.

Reports of extreme weather events are usually broadcasted over the radio. Keep informed of what's happening in your area. For these types of events, it is very helpful to have a supply of canned food, bottled water, candles and matches, and a transistor radio with new batteries. For more information on what to do visit the Emergency Preparedness Canada website at [www.epc-pcc.gc.ca/publicinfo/](http://www.epc-pcc.gc.ca/publicinfo/) or call 1-800-830-3118.

### Heat waves

These are the weeks you hate - over 30°C for days on end. Everybody's cranky. Expect more of them with climate change. And with heat, there's the risk of heat stress. It's a dangerous condition that happens when the temperature of your body rises too high. Children and the elderly are most at risk.

If it is very hot outside, keep infants and children out of the sun and give them lots of water to drink. Limit time outside to early morning or later in the evening. If you don't have cool areas in your home, head to a mall, library or other air-conditioned space to cool off. Use fans to help keep you cool!

## Air pollution

Longer, hotter summers mean more "bad air days". Air pollution can inflame and damage lung tissue, especially in infants and children whose lungs are still developing. Children get more pollutants into their lungs than their parents because, pound for pound, they breathe more.

Air pollution is a trigger for asthma attacks. Listen and watch for air quality advisories in the local media. Reduce the activity of children during these advisories. If your child has breathing problems, consult a doctor; if their breathing is very bad, go to the emergency department of your local hospital.

## Water Quality

Heavy rains and flooding may cause sewage, animal wastes, pesticides, industrial effluent and other pollutants to enter and contaminate our drinking water supplies. Droughts also cause problems by concentrating contamination and/or forcing people to turn to less clean water sources. Warmer rivers and lakes promote the growth of microorganisms that may cause disease.

