

World Health Organization (WHO)

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WHO supports countries in developing heat-health action plans, establishing early warning systems, and integrating climate risks into health governance to protect vulnerable populations and enhance the resilience of health systems.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is the United Nations agency for health. Working with its 194 Member States, WHO supports countries in achieving the highest standard of health for all people.

WHO works to promote health by addressing its determinants and responding to climate change, including the growing threat of extreme heat; to provide health by advancing primary health care, improving health service coverage, and ensuring financial protection; and to protect health by preventing, preparing for, detecting, and effectively responding to health emergencies.

Lead Heat Entities:

- WHO-WMO Joint Office for Climate and Health
- WHO Climate Change, Environment and Health Department
- WHO Health Security and Preparedness Department
- WHO Regional Offices and Specialised Environmental Health Centres:
 - WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Centre for Environmental Health Action (CEHA)
 - WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH)
 - WHO Asia-Pacific Centre for Environment and Health (ACE)

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KEY FACTS

Health facility readiness for extreme heat is significantly absent in many of the most exposed regions in the world.

In many South Asian and sub-Saharan African countries, more than 1 in 10 health facilities lack any electricity access, with unreliable power for half of facilities in sub-Saharan Africa. Water is essential to treat heat stress and heatstroke. Unfortunately, global monitoring in 2021 reveals only 53% of health facilities have basic water services, while 20% do not have water access.

UN SG Call to Action on Extreme Heat; WHO, UNICEF Joint News Release: Half of health care facilities globally lack basic hygiene services; WHO Heat and Health Factsheet

Heat-related illnesses are a serious health threat.

Excessive heat can lead to heatstroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, heat syncope, heat edema, and heat rash. It can also cause severe dehydration, acute cerebrovascular events, and contribute to thrombogenesis. Heat further worsens chronic conditions, such as cardiac and pulmonary diseases, kidney disorders, and mental health issues. While direct deaths from heatstroke are less frequent, most heat-related deaths occur due to the exacerbation of pre-existing conditions.

WHO-WMO Heatwaves and Health: Guidance on Warning-System Development (2015)

Heat-health early warning systems can significantly reduce heat-related deaths.

A 2021-WHO survey found that only 33% of the 84 respondent countries have climate-informed heat-health early warning systems in place. Scaling up these systems globally could save an estimated 98,314 lives per year.

WHO 2021 Climate Change and Health Global Survey; WHO Investment Case 2025-2028

Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health (ATACH)

ATACH works to fulfill the ambition set at COP26 to build climate-resilient and sustainable health systems by leveraging the collective power of WHO Member States and other stakeholders to advance this agenda at pace and scale. It promotes the integration of health considerations into national, regional, and global climate change plans, as well as the integration of climate considerations into health plans. As a leading global network, ATACH brings together expertise, experience, tools, and access to critical information and opportunities, equipping countries with the resources needed to protect their populations in the face of rising temperatures and a changing climate.

Core Partners: 95+ countries/areas and 90+ partners internationally

Heatwaves as a Health Topic

Anchored on the WHO website, Heatwaves as a Health Topic is a one-stop resource that equips both the public and public health professionals with essential information on heatwaves, actions that can be taken. It provides readily available communication materials, which is linked to the annual #KeepCool campaign, along with answers to frequently asked questions on how to protect oneself during a heatwave.

Core Partners: World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

WHO partnership with the European Climate and Health Observatory

The European Climate and Health Observatory aims to support the European Region in preparing for and adapting to the impacts of climate change on human health by providing access to relevant information and tools, including on heat-health.

Core Partners: European Commission

★ Featured initiative

Global Heat Health Information Network

The WMO-WHO Joint Office for Climate and Health, in collaboration with key partners, hosts the Global Heat Health Information Network—an independent, voluntary, and member-driven forum uniting scientists, practitioners, and policymakers focused on improving capacity to protect populations from the avoidable health risks of extreme heat in our changing climate.

The Network focuses on partnerships and capacity building, heat vulnerability and impact science, heat prediction services, interventions, and communication and outreach.

Core Partners: World Meteorological Organization (WMO), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

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Country Technical Support

The WHO supports countries to:

- Develop Vulnerability and Adaptation (V&A) Assessments to improve the understanding of the linkages between climate change and health, including an element of heat and health, when relevant, and serve as a baseline analysis against which protective measures can be monitored.
- Develop Health National Adaptation Plans (HNAP) ensuring that a comprehensive response to climate change risks is also included in the overall National Adaptation Planning (NAP) process.
- Provided that heat-related illnesses are identified as a priority health issue in V&As and HNAPs, assist countries in the development of Heat-Health Action Plans, which are specifically targeted at heat prevention, adaptation, and response.
- Develop climate-informed health early warning systems, including for heat-related health risks when relevant.
- Analyze, adapt, and/or implement environmental health observatories.
- Provide guidance and technical support to countries to identify and address the health risks from heat, including to access funds for implementation of heat related interventions.
- Integrate climate considerations into health systems strengthening and health programmes, and incorporate health into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

WHO Thematic Platform for Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management Research Network (Health EDRM RN)

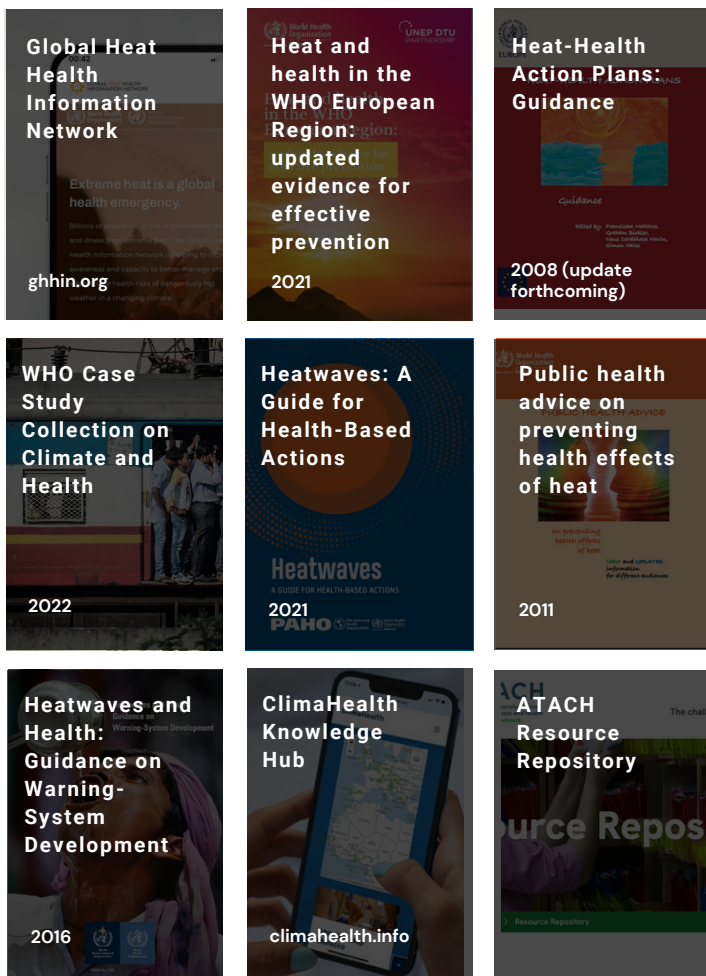
The Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management (Health EDRM) Research Network aims to inform its field of emergency and disaster medicine, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian response, community health resilience, and health system resilience on the integration of health as a core dimension.

Environmental Health Initiatives

The WHO leads key environmental health areas of work relating to extreme heat.

- The WHO Climate Change and Health Programme addresses the health impacts of climate change, including heat related impacts, by issuing technical guidance and tools, building capacity in countries and providing quality assurance for the integration of climate change within other WHO programmes.
- The WHO-WMO Joint Office on Climate Change and Health works to advance integrated climate and health sciences and services to better protect human health from climate change, extreme weather, including heat, and other hazards.
- The WHO Occupational Health topic area works to promote and maintain the highest degree of physical, mental, and social well-being of workers in all occupations. Heat stress is identified as an occupational risk, and is addressed through guidance, technical support, and country assistance.

HEAT RESOURCES



Foundational documents governing institutional heat activities

WHO General Programme of Work 2025–2028

includes climate change and health as the first priority for WHO's strategic objectives and joint outcomes. It includes an emphasis on health systems resilience, global health equity and access, climate change and disease prevention.

WHO Resolution (WHA78) and Global Plan of Action on Climate Change and Health.

The WHA Resolution calls on WHO for increased action on climate change and health and to develop the global plan of action that sets the priority actions to be implemented by WHO, countries and partners. The global plan of action was approved during the WHA79 in May 2025.

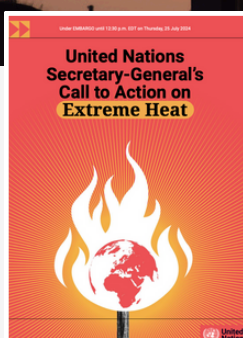
WHO Global Strategy on Health, Environment and Climate Change

This strategy aims to provide a vision and way forward on how the world and its health community need to respond to environmental health risks and challenges until 2030, and to ensure safe, enabling and equitable environments for health by transforming our way of living, working, producing, consuming and governing.

Second Edition of the Guidance on Heat-Health Action Plans

The WHO Regional Office for Europe is updating the Guidance on Heat-Health Action Plans (2008), incorporating the latest evidence, revised core elements, and step-by-step communication materials to better support countries in addressing the health impacts of extreme heat.

SUPPORTING THE SDGs, INCLUDING:



This heat action profile was developed by the [Global Heat Health Information Network](#) in partnership with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), as a contribution to the [United Nations Secretary-General's Call to Action on Extreme Heat](#) (2024). The content was validated by focal points from the profiled international organization / agency, and captures a snapshot of its heat work at the time of publication. The profile will be periodically updated.

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