

## PROTECTING HEALTH FROM CLIMATE CHANGE TOP 10 ACTIONS FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

### Global

1. **Advocate for a strong and equitable post-Kyoto agreement.** Current and projected stresses on the Earth's life support systems (food, shelter, water and energy) require a fair, scientifically sound and globally binding commitment to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions and stabilize the global climate.
2. **Promote the need for a "health-oriented" agreement.** Protecting health and well-being should be one of the three main objectives of the new agreement (alongside development and environment); the strengthening of health systems should be named as one of the priority areas for adaptation to climate change; and mitigation measures that bring health and other socioeconomic benefits should be prioritized.

### National/local

3. **Use your knowledge and authority to make the case for action.** Strengthen public and policy-maker awareness of the current and projected adverse and inequitable health impacts of climate change, as well as the potential for significant health benefits and consequent cost savings from well-conceived climate control policies. Work with others to plan adaptation and mitigation strategies.
4. **Assess your community and local health system's capacities to cope.** Measure and evaluate the preparedness of your personnel, institutions and systems to deal with country specific threats. Enhance your research capacities to evaluate threats and the effectiveness of interventions.
5. **Strengthen your health system's adaptive capacity.** Many of the projected impacts of climate change on health are avoidable or controllable through application of well-known and well-tested public health and health service interventions, such as public education, disease surveillance, disaster preparedness, mosquito control, food hygiene and inspection, nutritional supplementation, vaccines, primary and mental health care, and training. Where these capacities are weak, work with others to strengthen them.
6. **Encourage your health institutions to lead by example.** Health institutions - as highly visible, high-energy-use centres - can serve as models by reducing their own carbon emissions, improving health and saving money (see [www.corporatecitizen.nhs.uk](http://www.corporatecitizen.nhs.uk)). Seven potential action areas include: energy management, transport, procurement (including food and water), waste disposal, buildings and landscape, employment and skills, and community engagement. Good practice in these areas has been shown to improve staff health and morale, create healthier local populations, stimulate faster patient recovery rates and save money (see [www.globalclimate@hcvh.org](mailto:www.globalclimate@hcvh.org)).
7. **Champion the health benefits of greenhouse gas emission reductions (mitigation).** Reducing greenhouse gas emissions can be good for health. In countries where cars are the predominant means of transport, shifting to more walking and cycling will lower carbon emissions, increase physical activity (which will reduce obesity, heart disease and cancer), reduce traffic-related injuries and deaths, and result in less pollution and noise. In countries where solid fuels are the predominant form of household heating and cooking energy, changing to cleaner fuels and providing more efficient stoves will lead to fewer illnesses and deaths related to indoor air pollution.

### Personal

8. **Learn about climate-related health threats.** All health professionals should be provided with general and continuing education modules (see [http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/climate\\_change/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/climate_change/en/index.html)).
9. **Calculate and reduce your own carbon footprint.** There is much that we can all do, on a daily basis, to reduce our own contributions to greenhouse gas emissions. To calculate your "carbon footprint" see <http://actonco2.direct.gov.uk>.
10. **Promote these action points among your colleagues.** The health sector can take the lead in establishing a global social and economic framework that will promote health, social justice and survival - for current and future generations, both rich and poor, locally and globally.