



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Earth Day 2016: Take Action to Help Reduce Climate Impacts on Your Health



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BURLINGTON – For Vermont, climate change means even more than hotter summers, shorter winters, and more frequent storms—it can also affect our health. Vermonters can celebrate Earth Day by taking actions to address climate change, and take steps to help prevent the negative health effects of a changing climate.

Earth Day has a special meaning in Vermont. The opportunities we have to get out and enjoy and experience the environment and physical beauty of our state drives what Governor Peter Shumlin called our “common purpose in protecting our air, water, wildlife, and lands” in the face of climate change.

Vermont’s climate has become considerably warmer and wetter over the past 50 years. Air temperatures have increased by more than 4oF in winter and 2oF in summer, and annual precipitation has increased by seven inches. This winter’s record warmth has provided a glimpse into what the season may look like later this century, with temperatures expected to keep increasing due to global climate change.

These trends contribute to health impacts throughout the year. For example, ticks that can carry Lyme disease and anaplasmosis are already out and biting, and as Lake Champlain warms, the risk for blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) blooms increases.

“It’s increasingly important to be aware of climate-related health risks, and to know how to take care of yourself,” said Jared Ulmer, the Health Department’s Climate and Health program coordinator. “The Health Department has many resources to help. You can learn how to protect yourself from tick bites using our **Be Tick Smart** guide, use our interactive **Tick Tracker** to share reports of ticks you have found, and check current lake conditions on our **Blue-Green Algae Tracker**.”

Ulmer said climate change also exacerbates other health risks, such as extreme heat in the summertime, more allergy-causing pollen in the air, warmer and wetter conditions for mosquitoes to breed in, and a greater likelihood of damaging storms. “These risks may affect everyone, but some Vermonters are at higher risk, including older adults, people with pre-existing medical conditions, outdoor workers, people with low income, and homeless people.”

“Doing what we can to help reduce the impact of climate change can improve our health at the same time,” adds Ulmer. “You can plant a vegetable garden or trees in your yard, walk or bike instead of driving, and join in community efforts, such as participating in Green Up Day on May 7. The best thing you can do is get involved and stay informed.”

For more information about climate change health risks and action steps to reduce risks, including links to the resources listed above, visit <http://healthvermont.gov/enviro/climate>

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