Doctors, nurses and other health professionals view the health of their patients, families, and neighbors as a first priority. They want everyone to have opportunities to be healthy, but climate change threatens that.

**Climate Change has created a Health Emergency and a Health Opportunity.**

NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT.

Climate change is causing—and will cause more—dangerous heat days, days with unhealthy air quality, and more intense and frequent hurricanes, droughts, floods, and wildfires. Climate change is reshaping our communities and environments where we live, work and go to school and that takes a toll on our health and our sense of wellbeing.

**Heat and Extreme Weather:** Climate change is increasing average temperatures, driving heat waves, fueling wildfires, and causing more extreme weather events like heavy, flooding rains and winter storms. The warming of the ocean is fueling stronger and more frequent hurricanes. These changes cause worsening heat stroke, more dangerous air pollution, floods and people being displaced from their homes in the wake of these events.

**Spreading Infectious Diseases:** Doctors are seeing diseases like West Nile virus, Lyme disease, and dengue fever in new places across the country. Climate change is changing where the ticks and mosquitoes that spread them can live and thrive. Warmer springs and longer and warmer summers mean we’ll continue to see more cases of these diseases in new parts of the country.

**Unhealthy Air:** Air pollution from burning fossil fuels is causing climate change, but it’s also causing or worsening heart disease, asthma and lung disease, and cancer. The particles in air pollution can also threaten people who are pregnant and the health of their babies. At the same time, heat and wildfires are worsening outdoor air pollution and allergy seasons are getting longer and more intense, making it harder for some with allergies and asthma to breathe safely outside.

**Climate affects everyone’s health, but some are more vulnerable**

Climate change is a global health challenge—literally every person will experience those harms. But, like many threats, not every person experiences it in the same way or at the same time. Climate change has a greater impact on people for biological reasons like their age, gender, disabilities, or pre-existing health conditions. All of these can make some people feel the harms first. Climate change also has a greater impact on people with fewer resources, who work outside, and who live in communities that have been disadvantaged through bad policies, less investment and poor government planning. Because of these forces, Black, Latino, Indigenous and immigrant families are likely to feel these health harms more.
Climate solutions are major opportunities to rapidly improve health and equity

The policies and solutions that can best address climate change with the urgency we need will also rapidly give us cleaner air and water, and more opportunities to have healthy jobs and communities. They will also make our homes, communities and country more resilient in the face of future climate threats to our health.

Clean, Healthy Energy: By using clean, non-combustion, healthy energy to power our buildings and cars, everyone can breathe healthy air, fewer babies will be born prematurely, fewer people will experience worsening lung and heart conditions, and everyone can lead healthier lives. A rapid transition from dirty fossil fuels to clean, non-combustion renewable sources of energy can achieve these aspirations while also limiting climate change.

Healthy Communities: It’s easy to take for granted, but the places we live often shape our opportunities to be healthy. Looking around our communities we can see that things like trees and green spaces, safe parks, and how we use our land influence our opportunities to be healthy. These also play an important role in responding to and preventing climate change.

Healthy Buildings: Improving the buildings where we live, learn and work can also improve our health and help limit climate change. Too many buildings are wasting energy and leaking valuable heating and cooling. One result of this is that homes cost too much to run, leaving people to choose between their energy and other bills.

Healthy Transportation: Improving how we move around our communities, towns, cities and countryside is an opportunity to improve our health by cleaning the air and encouraging more physical activity. Electrifying our cars, trucks and buses—and powering them with clean, non-combustion renewable energy—is a pathway to cleaning the air we breathe and limiting climate change. We can also improve the design of our roads, sidewalks and communities to support safe walking and biking as practical, healthy modes of transportation.
Healthy Foods and Food Systems: It’s not surprising that the food we eat influences our health, but it influences our climate as well. How and what we grow for food, how we move it, and how we use it are vital to improving the health of people and the climate.

- Changing how we farm—focusing on soil health, using fewer chemical fertilizers, and varying crops, for example—can result in healthier foods, avoid health harms for agricultural workers and nearby communities, and help to store carbon in the ground.

- Programs and efforts to reduce food waste and redirect surplus food to communities in need are powerful tools to improve food security for families, reduce the demands on our farmers and keep food waste—which releases greenhouse gas emissions—out of landfills.

- Helping support people shift to healthier diets that are more plant-based can reduce meat production, which is a major source of heat-trapping pollution.

Equitable Solutions: Our responses to climate change must focus on building opportunities for every person to be healthier, and recognize that solutions look different in different places and for different communities. Climate and health solutions must be developed and implemented in partnership with the people and communities that are most impacted by the climate crisis.

That could mean investing in building parks and planting trees to lower the temperature in neighborhoods and clean the air in a community that has been disinvested in. It could also mean helping those workers whose families have been working in the fossil fuel industry apply those skills to new green industries of the future. We need health and climate solutions to right historical wrongs and build a fairer and more equitable future for all.

Now is the Time to Act

There is broad scientific consensus that we have little time to greatly reduce our emission of heat-trapping carbon pollution. Inaction on climate change is already costing Americans hundreds of billions of dollars each year—in the form preventable early deaths, medical treatment for physical and mental health problems, and loss of workers’ wages and reduced productivity.

- We must also prepare our hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, and public health departments for the health harms of future warming.

- Hospitals and doctor’s offices, which are a large share of the US economy, should “lead by example” by changing practices to release fewer greenhouse gases.

- Health experts must be central to guiding the development, monitoring and evaluation of climate solutions.

It is up to us to take ambitious actions to limit climate change and prevent needless health harms from the unavoidable change in the climate that is already underway. We have the tools, but we must take immediate action to stop the current climate health emergency from becoming worse.