The Medical Society Consortium
ON CLIMATE & HEALTH

HEALTH PROMISES SUMMARY

ELECTRICITY PRODUCTION

CLIMATE HARMS

25% of heat-trapping pollution and 61% of electricity come from fossil fuels, mostly from the use natural gas and coal.

HEALTH HARMS

Burning fossil fuels for electricity exposes people to air pollution and toxic chemicals leading to:

- Cardiovascular, respiratory and other causes of early death.
- Neurodevelopment delay, prematurity, low birth weight, attention deficit disorders and autism in babies and children.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Switching to renewable energy will:

- Rapidly help clean our air and water.
- Reduce illness, health care costs and early deaths.
- Produce more affordable electricity.
- Create more secure, well-paying jobs, which is an important determinant of health.

HEALTH AND EQUITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Stop investing in electricity produced by fossil fuels.
- Invest in and support clean, non-combustion renewable energy.
- Make the transition fair to everyone – including those who have been harmed most and those whose livelihoods depend on fossil fuel production.

TRANSPORTATION

CLIMATE HARMS

29% of heat-trapping pollution.

HEALTH HARMS

Burning fossil fuels for transportation exposes people to air pollution and toxic chemicals leading to:

- Cardiovascular, respiratory and other causes of early death.
- Neurodevelopmental delay, prematurity, low birth weight, attention deficit disorders and autism in babies and children.

Car-centered transportation leads to sedentary lifestyles which contribute to obesity, diabetes and heart disease and increased stress from noise and traffic congestion.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Switching to "low and no" emission vehicles and supporting active transportation alternatives will lead to improved health by:

- Reducing exposure to air pollution;
- Increasing physical activity and reducing obesity;
- Decreasing stress.

HEALTH AND EQUITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in increased active and public transportation and other non-polluting ways to get places – walking, cycling and wheeling.
- Make things easier for non-drivers.
- Electrify all possible sources of transportation, including cars, trucks, buses, trains and ships.
- Address inequities of those who have lived with unfair exposure to the pollution, such as from roads and highways.

BUILDINGS AND HOMES

CLIMATE HARMS

Commercial and residential buildings are responsible for **13%** of heat-trapping pollution.

HEALTH HARMS

Use of energy-inefficient building materials and designs, and fossil-fuel for cooking, heating and cooling increases indoor and outdoor air pollution, and harms health.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Available, affordable approaches to designing, building and retrofitting homes and commercial buildings improve health by reducing exposure to indoor and outdoor air pollution.

HEALTH AND EQUITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand programs like the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) to reduce the cost of energy for low-income households.
- Support community resilience hubs that coordinate services and increase social cohesion in response to extreme weather events.
- Provide tax incentives to support switching to appliances that don't depend on fossil fuels. Invest in "cool" buildings that reduce the "heat island" effect.
- Address the "big picture" issue of the overall lack of affordable housing.

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTS

CLIMATE HARMS

Climate change increases health harms in communities and neighborhoods due to:

- Increased exposure to heat and humidity which can harm health directly and indirectly by exacerbating chronic illnesses (e.g., asthma, lung and heart conditions);
- Increased exposure to health and safety harms of flooding from heavy downpours, extreme weather events and sea-level rise.

HEALTH BENEFITS

- Planting trees, and increasing greenspace combats the "urban heat island" effect and the heath harms of exposure to extreme heat.
- Creating green infrastructure (e.g., retention ponds, permeable pavements) reduces health and safety risks of stormwater runoff, flooding and water shortages.
- Providing spaces for recreation, relaxation and social engagement can improve mental health, increase physical activity.

HEALTH AND EQUITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create more community greenspaces in communities that lack them. Over 100 million Americans do not have greenspace within 10 minutes of their homes.
- Assure that everyone has access to clean and affordable drinking water and sanitation services.
- Ensure that our drinking water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure are adequate to meet the rising threats of climate change.
- Focus on addressing inequities. For example, the hottest neighborhoods with the greatest "heat island" effects are those which suffered from discriminatory "redlining" practices.

FOOD AND FOOD SYSTEMS

CLIMATE HARMS

Food production is responsible for **10%** of heat-trapping pollution (GHG emissions).

HEALTH HARMS

Climate change threatens the safety, nutritional value and adequacy of the food supply due to:

- Increased flooding which leads to increased food and water contamination.
- Increased droughts, heat and floods leading to reduced livestock and ground crops.
- Increased runoff of fertilizers leading to reduced harvests of fish and shellfish.

HEALTH BENEFITS

- Policies promoting more plant-based diets can reduce emissions and improve health.
- Climate-smart "regenerative" agricultural practices reduce emissions, runoff of fertilizer, and can improve nutrition.
- Reducing food waste and food loss will reduce emissions and make food more affordable.

HEALTH AND EQUITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reduce the exposure to toxic emissions and pollution of families living or going to school near industrial farming operations.
- Reduce the exposure of agricultural workers and their families to pesticides.
- Take steps to protect fish habitats and support adaptation efforts of indigenous communities that traditionally rely on hunting, fishing and subsistence farming.
- Increase access to affordable, healthy foods by eliminating "food deserts", eliminating food insecurity and supporting adaption efforts of indigenous communities.

VIEW FULL REPORT:
[THE HEALTH PROMISE OF CLIMATE SOLUTIONS](#)