



An international campaign to mobilize nurses to educate 50,000 health professionals on the impacts of climate change on human health.

Tips for talking about climate change with colleagues

You don't need to be an expert on climate science or all the ways climate change affects health. You just need to feel confident in sharing some essential information with your colleagues so they understand the basics and are motivated to learn more.

To begin, we recommend watching "[Let's Talk Health & Climate](#)," which provides nurses with communication tools, like message framing and tested language, to help cultivate an effective voice. Also, visit the [Climate Change Toolkit for Health Professionals](#) from the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment.

Talking Tips

- 1. Focus on people – not polar bears.** Center the conversation on human health. Climate change resonates more with people when we connect it to health.
- 2. Make it personal.** People tune in when they hear a story that resonates with their own experience. If you share a friend or family member's story, ask permission to use their name.
- 3. Emphasize the present...and the future.** We are already seeing the effects of a changing climate in our communities. Emphasize how climate change is not a distant threat but an urgent reality. We need to act now for the sake of future generations. If we do not, our children and grandchildren will experience the greatest health impacts.
- 4. Keep it local.** Share stories from your city, province, or territory. Instill a sense of urgency by emphasizing how climate change is already impacting the health of your community – not just on TV and to people far away. See [Canada's Changing Climate Report](#) for specific regional impacts to share.
- 5. Know your audience.** Facts speak to some, while dollar signs are a priority for others. You become more persuasive by talking a little bit about both. So include at least one meaningful fact from a trusted health messenger, as well as explaining how climate solutions, like energy efficiency, save health systems money.
- 6. Stay hopeful and focus on solutions.** Health professionals are go-getters. Provide options for action so your listeners don't come away feeling hopeless or overwhelmed. A doom-and-gloom speech can be disempowering. Assure your audience that by working together in a community – with their help – we can forge a path to a healthier future for all.
- 7. Provide clear next steps.** Share the [Guide for Taking Action](#). Encourage them to learn more. Invite them to work with you to make changes in your health care setting.

Effective messages and phrases from [Center for Climate Change Communication](#):

- Damage to the climate
- Clean energy
- Locally made energy
- Wind and solar energy
- Better for families
- Our children
- Future generations
- We have a plan for a healthier future
- Air we breathe
- Live our best lives
- Care for our health
- Care for ourselves
- Create healthy and safe communities
- Good for our (city/province/territory)
- We can

Strategies for having tough conversations with your audience

Climate change can be difficult for some people to understand and has become a politicized topic in Canada. Below are three questions that might come up in your conversations about climate and health with sample responses. If these, or other tough questions arise, don't let them get you off track. Offer to send your colleague additional information after the presentation or set up a time to talk further after the presentation. Above all, don't get defensive, thank the person for the question, and stay true to your message.

1. "Will this effort make an impact?"

You bet. Just like the butterfly effect or ripples in a pond, a small action can cause a wave of impacts. By learning more, you are already gaining the tools to make better climate decisions in your own life. By educating and inspiring your colleagues, you are preparing them to make healthier choices at work and home that will reduce emissions from fossil-fuel based energy that damage our climate and our health. Plus, it's likely your audience members will continue the conversation with others.

2. "I'm not sure I believe climate change is real."

While we may not agree on what to do about climate change, the science is clear that climate change is real - and it is primarily human-caused. While it may seem like the changes in some areas are slow, they are indeed happening. It is in our patients' and children's best interest to use the precautionary approach to prevent additional damage to our climate, and thus the related health impacts. In addition to reducing greenhouse gases, transitioning to clean energy will lead to many co-benefits like improvements in human health, help build stronger communities, invigorate our economy with clean energy jobs, and ultimately protect future generations.

3. "I'm not sure I see the effects of climate change. Is it actually affecting our patients?"

Let's talk examples. The effects of a damaged climate are happening across the nation, including extreme heat and extreme cold, flooding, stronger storms, and shifts in habitats of disease-carrying insects, such as ticks and mosquitoes. These effects lead to health issues, such as increased respiratory and cardiovascular disease, injuries and deaths from extreme weather events, food- and water-borne illnesses, the spread of infectious diseases, and increased mental illness. What's worse: Certain populations are more at risk of the health impacts, such as children, the elderly, low-income communities and people experiencing homelessness, those with chronic diseases, those who work outside, those with mental illness, and those with cognitive or physical impairments. Health professionals care for all populations across the lifespan. Being able to identify the health effects of climate change and those at a higher risk is part of our job.

Resources

These resources were used to enhance the Nurses Climate Challenge talking tips and can be referenced for further information.

[Let's Talk Health & Climate: Communication Guidance for Health Professionals](#), ecoAmerica

[Climate Communication Primer for Public Health Professionals](#), George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

[Climate change messaging guidance](#), Yale Center for Climate Change Communication

[Climate Effects on Health](#), Centers for Disease Control

[Climate at a Glance](#), National Centers for Environmental Information

[Climate change and health](#), Climate Atlas of Canada

[Climate change and human health](#), Canadian Public Health Association

[Canadian Centre for Climate Services](#), Government of Canada

