

CARING FOR OUR CLIMATE AND OUR CHILDREN

As we move into summer, many Americans look forward to spending time in nature with their children and families. Summer is often a time for children to learn more about God's creation through faith-based summer programs and outdoor activities. But as our faith compels us to care for and love children, we need to be aware of the health issues caused by our changing climate. Increased heat stress, decreased air quality, more intense or prolonged allergy seasons, influxes of ticks and other pests, not to mention severe weather events all impact children. June's Talking Points focus on some of the most climate-vulnerable Americans — our children.

1. ***As we move into summer, we look forward to quality family time in nature.*** Our children get a break from school and homework to spend more time outdoors.
2. ***Summer is a time where kids can be more active, and time outside in nature can help them be happier and healthier.*** Parents can also reap these benefits!
3. ***But summertime can also impact children's health.*** So many of us know a child who has suffered from asthma or allergies, heat stress, or Lyme disease from ticks.
4. ***Some of us may have differing perspectives on the causes of climate change, but we can all see that extreme weather events — heat waves, storms, hurricanes, heavy downpours, and wildfires — bring new health risks to our children.*** Children are estimated to bear 88% of the burden of climate change-related disease globally.
5. ***The fact is, children are more vulnerable to climate change.*** They're not just little adults — their immune systems are still developing. They take in more air and they are more heat-sensitive. Socioeconomic factors put children in low-income populations and communities of color at even greater risk.
6. ***According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children's mental and physical health are also threatened by the far-reaching effects of climate change, including community instability, mass migrations, and increased conflict.***
7. ***We have the power to halt the pollution that causes climate change, and protect the health and wellbeing of our children at the same time.*** Each of us can, right now, move away from burning fuels that pollute the air they breathe and water they drink.
8. ***By switching to clean energy, like wind and solar, we can clean their air, heal our climate, and ensure that our kids are healthy.*** We need to do this today, and we can!
9. ***Caring for our children includes caring for our climate.*** We can leave our children and future generations an America where the air is clean and the water is safe, where families can have happy and healthy summers, now and for years to come.

COUNTERPOINTS

Following are the current arguments against the need for climate action with regards to the health and wellbeing of our children, and suggested responses.

- 1. In many places the air quality has gotten better (does not affect me), not worse.**
Response: Policies and programs to clean our air have worked. Some improvements have been made and should be celebrated. But overall Americans are increasingly exposed to poor air quality that threatens children's health. The [2018 State of the Air report by the American Lung Association](#) found that more than 4 out of every 10 Americans are exposed to unhealthy air, and rates are increasing each year. Most of this is caused by burning dirty fuels.
- 2. You're just using children to promote your environmental agenda.**
Response: We all want the best for our children – their health, happiness, and success. I think we can agree that we care about whether or not the air they breathe or water they drink is polluted. We should all want to do what we can to nurture a world in which children and future generations have the chance to live their best lives.
- 3. I need to spend money on good food and education for my kids, not stopping some questionable threat of climate change.**
Response: Many of us have financial and time pressures, and we can't do everything. But, everything you do to save energy saves you money and helps with climate change. And, everything you do to protect the health of our climate protects the health, wellbeing and success of your children and family.
- 4. There have always been threats to kids' health. They will adjust.**
Response: Kids shouldn't have to adjust to pollution, and can't. The American Public Health Association says that climate change is the biggest public health threat we face, and the American Academy of Pediatrics agrees. We all need to do what we can about the many health issues facing our children, including prioritizing climate change and the pollution that causes it.
- 5. I can't make a difference.**
Response: Taking action on climate is something that we can all do. We can all be part of the solution. Conserving energy, recycling, and walking or biking more can help. We can also push for clean energy choices, such as wind and solar power. These improvements will protect us against climate change, strengthen our communities, bring good jobs, and help ensure the health and wellbeing of our children and future generations.