



## Climate Change:

Our Health in the Balance

Michigan's Public Health Week  
April 14 - April 22, 2008

## Mental Health

*There is a direct connection between climate change and the health of our nation today. Children, the elderly, the poor, and people with chronic health conditions are most at risk for negative health impacts of climate change. Extreme weather (such as heat waves, tornadoes, or hurricanes) caused by climate change can cause significant psychological stress, with long-lasting effects on anxiety levels and depression.*

### What You Should Know

- A catastrophe as a result of climate change such as an earthquake, hurricane, tornado, fire, flood, can cause great mental distress on people directly impacted by the disaster.
- Following a natural disaster it is normal to feel anxious about you and your family's safety. A catastrophe is frightening to children and adults alike. It is important to explain the event in words the child can understand to help them cope with the disaster.
- A person's response to a traumatic event may vary. Responses include feelings of fear, grief and depression. Physical and behavioral responses include nausea, dizziness, and changes in appetite and sleep pattern as well as withdrawal from daily activities. Responses to trauma can last for weeks to months before people start to feel normal again.

### LOCAL AND NATIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE

#### Michigan Prepares Website

<http://www.michigan.gov/michiganprepares>

#### U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration

Center for Mental Health Services  
[http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/  
EmergencyServices](http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/EmergencyServices)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Natural Disasters & Severe Weather  
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/>

#### Federal Emergency Management Agency

<http://www.fema.gov/rebuild/index.shtm>

#### U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

[http://www.hhs.gov/disasters/emergency/  
mentalhealth/index.html](http://www.hhs.gov/disasters/emergency/mentalhealth/index.html)

#### National Institute of Mental Health

[http://www.nimh.nih.gov/topics/coping-with-  
traumatic-events.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/topics/coping-with-traumatic-events.shtml)

## What You Can Do

### Signs that Stress Management Assistance is Needed

- Disorientation or confusion and difficulty communicating thoughts
- Limited attention span and difficulty concentrating
- Becoming easily frustrated
- Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt
- Depression, sadness and feelings of hopelessness
- Mood swings and crying easily
- Difficulty maintaining balance
- Headaches/stomach problems
- Tunnel vision/muffled hearing
- Colds or flu-like symptoms
- Difficulty sleeping
- Poor work performance
- Reluctance to leave home
- Fear of crowds, strangers or being alone
- Increased use of drugs/alcohol

### Ways to Ease the Stress

- Talk with someone about your feelings even though it may be difficult.
- Take steps to promote your own physical and emotional healing by staying active in your daily life patterns or by adjusting them.
- Maintain a normal household and daily routine, limiting demanding responsibilities of yourself and your family.
- Use existing support groups of family, friends, and spiritual/religious outlets.

If you or a member of your family still has trouble coping with the aftermath of the disaster, ask for help. Consult a counselor or a mental health professional.

### Partners in Planning

- ✧ Michigan Department of Community Health ✧ Michigan Association for Local Public Health ✧
- ✧ Michigan Environmental Council ✧ Michigan Public Health Association ✧
- ✧ Michigan Public Health Institute ✧ Michigan State University ✧
- ✧ University of Michigan School of Public Health ✧

