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KEY FACTS

Climate change is the single biggest **health threat** facing humanity¹. Watch COP26 ClimatePrescription Video [here](#).

Healthcare has a higher global carbon contribution (4.4%) than aviation (2%) or even shipping (3%)².

The NHS is the **largest employer** in the UK and is responsible for **4% of national carbon emissions**³.

Medicines alone account for 25% of NHS carbon emissions³

All NHS staff can have a **major impact** in reducing the nation's carbon emissions, but in particular, **pharmacists** are well placed for making the greatest difference as specialists in medicines.

References

1. Climate change and health, WHO, March 2021, available at [Climate change and health \(who.int\)](#)
2. Climate policies and legislation, Carbon Literacy for Healthcare, NHS Learning Hub, published June 2023 available at [Learning Hub - Home](#)
3. Delivering a 'Net Zero' National Health Service, NHS England, July 2022, available at [B1728-delivering-a-net-zero-nhs-july-2022.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](#) Greener NHS »

CLIMATE AND HEALTH

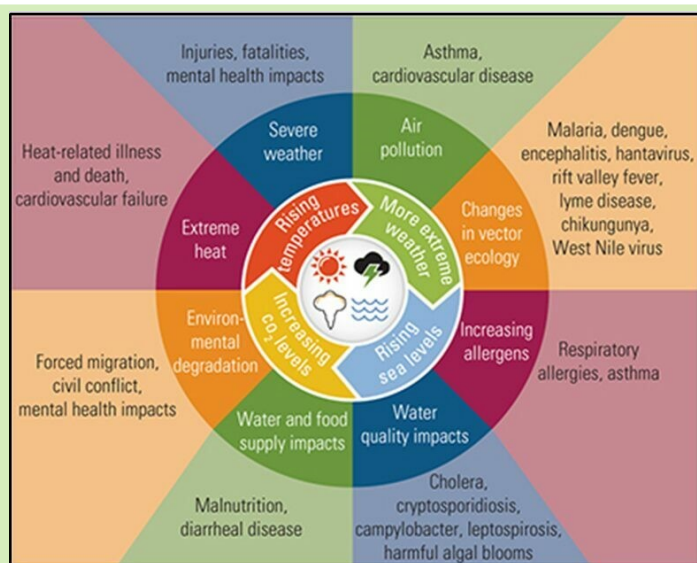


Figure 1: UK Health Security Agency 'How science can protect us from the health effects of climate change'.

For more information, read the BMJ overview of systematic reviews of the Health effects of climate change [here](#).

CARBON IMPACT OF MEDICINES

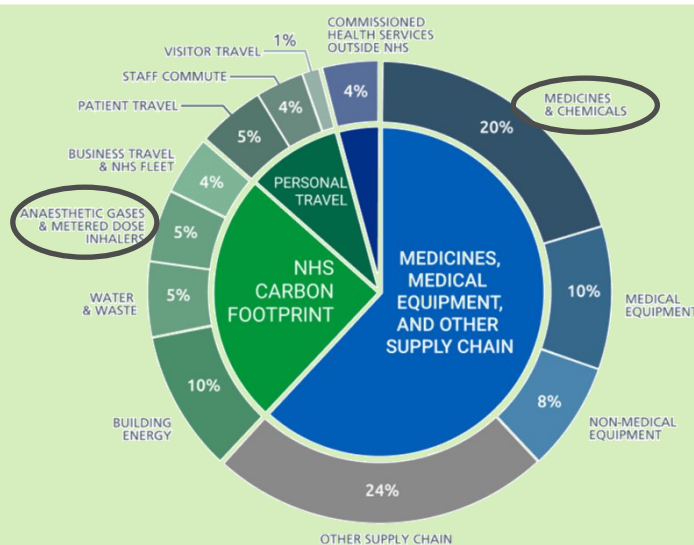


Figure 2: Office for Health Improvements and Disparities, 'Sources of carbon emissions by proportion of NHS Carbon Footprint Plus'.

Large portion of medicines emissions - **anaesthetic gases** (2% of emissions) and **inhalers** (3% of emissions)³.

SUSTAINABILITY INTERVENTIONS

The principles of sustainable clinical practice are:

1. PREVENTION

Promoting health and preventing disease by tackling the causes of illnesses and inequalities

3. LEAN SERVICE DELIVERY

Streamlining care systems to minimise wasteful activities



2. PATIENT SELF-CARE

Empowering patients to take a greater role in managing their own health and healthcare

4. LOW CARBON ALTERNATIVES

Prioritising treatments and technologies with a lower environmental impact

Mortimer, F. The Sustainable Physician. Clin Med 10(2), April 1, 2010. D110-111.



Examples of how these principles can be employed in practice:

1. Switch from IV to oral paracetamol
2. Support children to swallow tablets/ capsules, switch from liquids
3. Medicines Optimisation and de-prescribing initiatives
4. Switch from metered dose inhalers to dry powder inhalers.

For more inspiration, see the [RPS Climate Change Action List](#).

GET INVOLVED!

Pharmacy Sustainability Networks



Pharmacy SusNet
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Centre for Sustainable Healthcare hosts many profession-specific virtual network platforms to promote sustainable healthcare within their respective fields. The pharmacy network has been developed this year.

By signing up, you can network with members and access tools for sustainable pharmacy practice and education. Register [here](#).

Other sustainability networks include:

- [Pharmacy Declares](#)
- [Guild Healthcare Pharmacists Sustainability Strategy team](#)
- [Pharmacists for Greener Practice](#)
- [Greener NHS Community, FutureNHS](#)
- Greener NHS Knowledge Hub, FutureNHS (use above link)