

Kaiser Permanente

Responding to Climate Change through a Total Health Approach to Health Care

Broad-Spectrum Strategies in an Age of Climate Change

The impact of climate change poses one of the most significant threats to public health that the world has seen to date. The trauma caused by extreme weather, the rise of respiratory diseases linked to pollution and the spread of infectious diseases through insects and other animal vectors are just some of the known effects of climate change that are already being felt.

Kaiser Permanente, one of America's leading health care providers and not-for-profit health plans, understands that it is our responsibility as a health care provider to minimize our impact on the environment in order to live out our mission to provide high-quality, affordable health care services and to improve the health of our members and the communities we serve. We recognize that responding to climate change requires that we not only reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and reduce our overall energy consumption as an organization, but that we employ a broad spectrum of strategies to support health in every aspect of our care delivery.

A Total Health Approach

At Kaiser Permanente, we believe in "Total Health," an approach that understands and addresses the interconnected drivers of health — clinical, behavioral, communal and environmental — that shape individual well-being. We contribute to healthy environments by reducing our environmental impact in all aspects of our operations and providing a safe and supportive environment of care.

Support for active transportation reduces carbon emissions and encourages a healthy, active lifestyle

Natural lighting conserves energy and brings the outside indoors

Paints and fabrics used in our interiors mitigates against exposure to harmful chemicals

Use of on-site renewable energy lessens our reliance on fossil fuels

Mail-order prescriptions save time, money and energy associated with pharmacy trips

State-of-the-art building technology utilizes safe and energy-efficient flooring and construction materials

A robust electronic medical record system integrates care and reduces our carbon footprint

Thoughtfully planned landscapes require minimal watering and breathe life into our care settings

Sustainable food on patient menus and farmers markets outside our medical centers support healthy eating habits

How Does a Healthy Environment Support Total Health?



Our Priority Areas

Kaiser Permanente has been committed to the environment since our founding in the early 1940s. Our environmental stewardship efforts are anchored in promoting the health of our communities. To encourage healthy environments, we lead or support innovative efforts in the following areas:

Finding Safe Alternatives to Harmful Chemicals



TARGET: Procure the chemically-safest products from targeted product list that meet all critical product requirements.

RECENT RESULTS: Evaluated and selected alternative products containing safer chemicals, including IV bags & tubing, cleaning chemicals, high-level disinfectants, solvents, enzymatic detergents, resilient flooring, paint and cabinetry.



Responding to Climate Change

TARGET: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an absolute 30% by 2020 (compared to 2008 baseline).

RECENT RESULTS: As of year end 2012, we have reduced absolute emissions by approximately 5 percent from the baseline.



Promoting Sustainable Farming & Food Choices

TARGET: Increase spending on sustainable foods to 20% of total food spending by year end 2015.

RECENT RESULTS: Of the total amount we spent on food in 2012, 16% was on sustainable foods.



Reducing, Re-using & Recycling to Eliminate Waste

TARGET: Re-use, recycle or compost at least 40% of waste by year end 2015.

RECENT RESULTS: In 2012, we re-used or recycled 36 percent (approximately 31,000 tons) of the waste that we generated.



Conserving Water

TARGET: Design all new Kaiser Permanente buildings with a water use target of at least 30% less than the baseline established by Energy Policy Act of 1992.

RECENT RESULTS: We modified our facilities design criteria to require Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification for new construction of all hospitals, large medical offices and other major projects.