

# Starrbrook News

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## Is Climate-Change Linked to Human Diseases?

Dinah Voyles Pulver



Everyone knows rats, bats, mold and mosquitoes can make people sick, but a new study out this week concludes such pathogens and hundreds more are made worse by the warming world. A group of University of Hawaii researchers put together a list of 376 human diseases and allergens, then looked at how they're affected by climate-related weather hazards, such as heat waves, flood, drought, fire and rain.

They found nearly 60% of the known pathogens that make people sick have been aggravated by warming-related weather hazards, according to the study published this week in Nature Climate Change. The list included not only mosquito-borne viruses like malaria and dengue fever but also asthma, monkeypox, shellfish poisoning and even fungal infections like valley fever. The researchers reviewed more than 70,000 academic studies and papers to search for links between the pathogens and 10 climate-related weather hazards.

"The results were truly sobering," said Erik Franklin, assistant professor at the university's Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology and a study co-author. Climate hazards are bringing pathogens and people closer together, strengthening the pathogens and impairing people, Franklin said. "This is a massive vulnerability for human health care systems."

Even after sounding warnings about the consequences of climate change on human health for more than 25 years, Jonathan Patz, a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Nelson Institute, was still surprised at the many ways researchers found climate hazards affect disease. "They found over 1,000 unique pathways," said Patz, also a co-author of the study. "That to me was striking."

The pathways included things like flood-transmitted disease and mosquitoes that thrive in heavy rainfall, spreading malaria and other diseases.

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## Teenagers Find Making Friendships So Hard

Laura Newberry

Many teens are struggling socially right now and academics are starting to track the issue. A survey by Harvard's Saul Zaentz Early Education Initiative's Early Learning Study found that 61% of parents thought that their child's social-emotional development had been harmed by the pandemic.

According to the experts, most kids are tremendously relieved to be back at school and have re-acclimated quickly. Even still, educators and therapists are reporting that more teens than usual are socially anxious.

There are a few reasons for this. For one, kids got used to having a ton of free time in the days of distance learning; high school by contrast can be overwhelming. "There's just a lot of stimulation happening," said Rebecca Good, a psychologist who works with kids and teens in Palo Alto.

"They've spent a year and a half in their room, staring at a screen, not talking to a whole lot of people. Now they're navigating crowded hallways, different classrooms, and picking back up on all the nonverbal language they're not used to reading anymore." Relational skills are like muscles that need to be exercised, Good explained. And those muscles inevitably weakened while kids were on lockdown.

Therapists have indicated that there are teens who are having panic attacks in their cars and crying in their rooms when they get home. They're unsure of how to start conversations, avoid old friends and extracurriculars, and get into more squabbles.

One of Good's clients dropped out of an in-person college class because the idea of group work was too much to handle.

Those who were timid and had a hard time fitting in before the pandemic may feel compounded social anxiety right now, said Jaana Juvonen, a UCLA professor of developmental psychology who studies teen peer relationships.

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## "Say I For Tattoo, Nay If it's Taboo"

Jodie Michalak



It feels like tattoos are everywhere these days, but they've actually been around for ages, so how did they become so popular? Dating back to the Neolithic period and indigenous tribes, tattooing was originally practiced for myriad reasons, including during religious ceremonies and as a rite of passage. While we don't have an exact date for the first tattoos, Dr. David Lane, an assistant professor at Illinois State University who has done extensive research on tattooing, tells us that tattooing has been around for at least 5000 years.

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# Weather Hazards Linked to Nearly 60 Percent of Human Diseases



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"It just amplifies the key message that the climate crisis is a human health crisis," Patz said. "When we're talking about 58% of all infections and other human pathogenic diseases being affected by climate, it demands that we shift our attention away from thinking about every single disease and vaccine."

The study reveals "worrisome glimpses" into the possible consequences of health crises in the future and points to an "urgent need" to reduce fossil fuel emissions that cause the planet to warm, Franklin and others said. "There are just too many diseases and pathways of transmission for us to think that we can truly adapt to climate change," said co-author Camilo Mora, geography professor in the University of Hawaii's College of Social Sciences. "It highlights the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally."

The study found 63 pathogens had been diminished at some point by climactic hazards, such as cases in which warming reduced the spread of viral diseases. All but nine of those had also been aggravated at some point by climate, however.

The authors cautioned that their work could reflect a bias, based on what the authors published in Google Scholar chose to study.

For example, researchers may be doing more studies about diseases aggravated by the changing climate or fewer studies about diseases less concerning because of climate change.

Have other recent studies looked at the effect of warming on pathogens? Yes. More than a half-dozen studies this year, including two this week, have pointed out the rising risk of disease transmission in a warming world.

Another study out this week, led by Mia Maltz, a microbial ecologist at the University of California, Riverside, found higher concentrations of dust carrying toxins from around the world are landing at lower elevations in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

The study also concluded increasing droughts could spread more pathogens in dust. "Pathogenic dust is becoming more of a threat as the Earth gets drier and more parched," Maltz said.

A study in April co-written by Colin Carlson, a global change biologist and assistant research professor at Georgetown University, and a group of collaborators found that changes in climate and land use could bring previously isolated wildlife species and their pathogens into new areas.

Carlson and others also have documented rapid range shifts in African anopheles mosquitoes over the past century. The researchers question the role climate change might have played and suggested it's an important topic for future research.

A co-author on another study, Dr. Aaron Bernstein, interim director of the Center for Climate, Health, and the Global Environment at Harvard School of Public Health, told The Associated Press the Hawaii study is a good warning as warming and habitat loss push animals and their diseases closer to people.

"This study underscores how climate change may load the dice to favor unwelcome infectious surprises," Bernstein told the AP in an email. "But of course it only reports on what we already know, and what's yet unknown about pathogens may be yet more compelling about how preventing further climate change may prevent future disasters like COVID-19."

## Teens Plus Friendships Equals Hard Transitions



Kids who don't have many others around them at school who are similar to them whether it be because of race, sexual orientation, gender expression or socioeconomic background are also at higher risk.

Teens transitioning to middle school, high school and college are particularly vulnerable because they missed out on crucial social milestones, Juvonen said. Take 10th-graders who are just now setting foot on a high school campus for the first time. They didn't get to attend summer gatherings or shadow days that are designed to help them make friends and adjust to their new environments.

"We can't leave kids alone in this," Juvonen stressed. "We can't trust that they are resilient and everything will be fine within a couple of months." social interactions are likely to avoid them, and they don't get the practice they need to get better at them." So what should you do if your teen is struggling socially? Good recommends encouraging downtime even watching Netflix or scrolling through TikTok.

Pressuring your child to join a million clubs and sports will only burn them out, she said. But too much virtual downtime can be detrimental.

"It's easy to just scroll on your phone to avoid talking to people," Juvonen said. "It's a vicious cycle because kids who are anxious about Ultimately, teens need to have in-person fun together outside of school to build strong friendships. Ask your kid if they'd like to have one or two classmates over, and be sensitive to their response. If they aren't ready yet, that's OK."

# Tattoos: The Good, The Bad and The Bumpy



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“The oldest human remains we’ve recovered have tattoos on them,” he says. Today, slow and steady, social acceptance has helped the tattooing industry grow larger and larger. From the talent behind today’s top tattooists to the ink and the tools that make their artwork possible, the sky is the limit for people who want their bodies to be a canvas.

## In the Beginning

Funny enough, explorer Captain James Cook is credited for both the words “taboo” and “tattoo.” His sailing voyage around the world led him to the Tahitian and Polynesian islands where tattooing was openly practiced. Inscribing the language into his diary, he introduced both words to the English language after his travels in 1769. The word “tattoo,” specifically, has been used ever since to define a permanent mark made by either ingraining pigments or creating scars. In modern days, however, “scarification” is used for the latter instead of the word tattoo.

Despite the common narrative, tattoos were not always considered so taboo. Lane says, “when we think of this, we have to remember that there’s also a long history of ‘elites’ getting tattooed,” pointing out that a tattoo shop existed as early as the late 1800s on Jermyn Street in London, the heart of the high-end fashion district, and that Winston Churchill and his mother were both inked.

Different cultures have different dominating ideas around tattooing that influence how body art is perceived. For example, Lane points out that, during Japan’s Edo Period, “tattooing was used almost exclusively for criminals and prisoners, and it was intentionally designed to mark people as outsiders.” In America, several factors contributed to the stigma against tattoos.

According to Lane, the Nazis use of tattoos during World War II to “put numbers on bodies for bureaucratic record-keeping,” the dominating force of the Protestant Ethic with its ideas about “purity of the body,” and the portrayal of tattooed criminals in both scientific research and media all helped influenced the overarching attitude. Fear of disease became another major factor: “In the 1950s we became increasingly medicalized, and this created a couple tattoo bans in states as well as cities in the United States,” says Lane.

## Changing Times

Given the rich history, perhaps it’s not surprising that tattoos have become more and more popular once again. In part, this is because they are being worn by public figures such as celebrities, athletes, and people within the fashion industry.

But another important aspect to acknowledge is the activism and awareness building done by the community of tattoo artists. According to Lane, tattooers with art degrees such as Cliff Raven and Ed Hardy, “were largely responsible for revamping some of the public imagery of tattooing in the ‘60s and ‘70s. In fact, initial tattoo conventions were actually about trying to create a kind of professional image.”

Later, tattooers would be at the forefront of the movement to legalize tattooing where it had been outlawed decades earlier, pushing for regulation that would make the practice safe once again. “[Tattooers were like] we need licenses, we need this to be a safe practice, we need some oversight.

They were key in that conversation as a group of stakeholders, getting it to be legal again.” “The 1970s was really a time period when we started seeing celebrities that were visibly tattooed,” Lane says, citing major stars such as Cher, Peter Fonda, and Janis Joplin as among the first to display their ink.

“In a sense I think we were seeing more of it or more different kinds of bodies; NFL players started getting tattooed on their arms, basketball players, baseball players. As a public, we can see more and more kinds of people with them.”

We know now that not everyone who has them is a criminal or someone with a shady moral compass, which unfortunately, used to be a common stereotype. Tattoos are finally being recognized as a form of self-expression, and design styles have expanded from American traditional tattoos to custom Japanese sleeves, to full body works of elaborate art that could tempt even those most wary of the machine into getting tattooed.

## Before You Leap

Planning your next, or even first tattoo is always fun. For some, it’s even difficult to look at a tattoo magazine without getting inspired for another design. Since tattoos are so addictive, it’s even more important that you have a plan after you start getting tattooed.

Otherwise, you may end up with more than you really want, or designs you later regret. When carefully considered, tattoos can be a wonderful tool of self-expression. “We live in a world where when you go from city to city or town to town or state to state, the kind of consumption that’s out there is increasingly similar.

There’s a McDonald’s, a Best Buy, a Michael’s Arts and Crafts, and so on. Tattooing isn’t like that, there aren’t big chains of tattooing, and it provides us with an opportunity to create individuality, it’s a way to challenge the fact that the places we visit and consume things are increasingly becoming similar,” says Lane.