

Government body warns of increased health threats from climate change in Germany

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This undated photo released Wednesday, Aug. 27, 2014, by National Institute of Infectious Diseases via Kyodo News, shows a tiger mosquito. Germany's disease control agency warned Thursday, June 1, 2023 that rising temperatures due to global warming will increase the likelihood of heat stroke, vector-borne illnesses and other health risks in the country. (AP Photo/National Institute of Infectious Diseases via Kyodo News) JAPAN OUT

Germany's disease control agency warned Thursday that rising temperatures due to global warming will increase the likelihood of heat stroke, vector-borne illnesses and other health risks in the country.

The Robert Koch Institute said lung diseases from [forest fires](#) and agricultural dust may become a growing problem, as will skin cancer due to increased [ultraviolet radiation](#) as Germany experiences longer periods of cloud-free weather.

In the first of the institute's three reports on the impact of climate change in Germany, published in the Journal of Health Monitoring, the authors noted the recent arrival in the country of Hyalomma ticks—capable of carrying bacteria responsible for typhus—as an example of newly emerging disease threats.

The ticks, as well as Asian tiger mosquitoes that can spread dengue, [yellow fever](#) and Zika virus, are migrating to new regions that were previously too cold for the species.

Another risk comes from Vibrio bacteria that flourish in brackish water above temperatures of about 20 degrees Celsius. The pathogens can enter the body through small breaks in the skin and cause severe illness in people with weakened immune systems unless quickly treated with antibiotics.

There have been several cases among swimmers infected with Vibrio bacteria on Germany's Baltic Sea coast in recent years.

The biggest threat, however, comes from prolonged heat waves. Scientists say these will become more frequent and extreme as climate change progresses. The Robert Koch Institute said about 4,500 people died during heat waves in Germany last year.

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