Join the Challenge, join Race to Zero

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Race to Zero?

Race to Zero (RtZ) is a global campaign initiated by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to rally leadership and support from non-state actors for a healthy, resilient, zero-carbon recovery that prevents future threats, creates decent jobs, and unlocks inclusive, sustainable growth. It mobilizes a coalition of leading net zero initiatives by cities, regions, businesses, investors, and universities. RtZ is inviting health sector participation through the Health Care Climate Challenge.

These coalitions join 120 countries in the largest ever alliance committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest and led by the High-Level Climate Champions for Climate Action - Nigel Topping and Gonzalo Muñoz. The objective is to build momentum around the shift to a decarbonized economy ahead of COP26, where governments must strengthen their contributions to the Paris Agreement. Although the key focus is zero emissions by 2050, Race to Zero is also heralded as a race to zero poverty, loss of biodiversity and pandemics.

2. What is the Health Care Climate Challenge?

Health Care Without Harm's Health Care Climate Challenge mobilizes health care institutions around the world to protect public health from climate change. The Climate Challenge currently has more than 300 participants representing the interests of more than 22,000 hospitals and health centers in 34 countries committed to climate mitigation, resilience and leadership.

The Health Care Climate Challenge has recently become the official Race to Zero health care partner. In this capacity, Health Care Without Harm will be working over the course of 2021 and beyond to build a robust leadership coalition of health care institutions committed to zero emissions by 2050 or sooner.

3. Why would a health care institution want to join the Race to Zero?

A health care organization should consider joining this initiative to:

- Join a United Nations cross-sectoral global campaign necessary to reach our global carbon reduction goals.
- Meet their obligation to "first, do no harm" and set a science-based greenhouse gas emissions reduction target.

- Support the organization's ambition to reach net zero carbon emissions.
- Develop a strategy to reduce carbon emissions systematically.
- Establish themselves as a leader in health care.

4. How does Health Care Without Harm define net zero and residual emissions?

Health Care Without Harm defines a **net zero goal** as a trajectory goal that requires an entity to set distinct emissions reduction targets in line with limiting warming to 1.5°C before considering the use of offsets. The goal must include emission reductions across all scopes and a separate approach to manage the remaining percentage of residuals emissions to promote equity and community resilience. Given this is a trajectory goal, there will need to be:

- Interim targets, in line with global efforts to limit warming to 1.5C, including 50% greenhouse gas reduction by 2030 for high emitting countries as highlighted in the Annex.
- Inclusion of additional emissions across all scopes as measuring tools and data become available.
- Recognition that the management of residuals emissions may need to include solutions from future innovation and research.

Residual emissions are emissions that are generally recognized by the sector as particularly difficult or expensive to remove despite targeted interventions, investment and focus. Residual emissions are expected to decrease over time as other sectors innovate and decarbonize and the health care sector uses its purchasing power to move markets and promote innovation.

5. Who can join Race to Zero?

The Race to Zero is open to all health care institutions including hospitals, health care systems, and health care facilities that are not national health ministries party to the UNFCCC. Individual hospitals and health systems operating under a health ministry or quasi-governmental institutions such as national health services can join Race to Zero.

6. Who cannot join?

Health ministries cannot join the Race to Zero directly but they can join the Health Care Climate Challenge. Health care suppliers and manufactures cannot join, as the Health Care Climate Challenge focuses on hospitals, health care systems and health care organizations only.

7. How do I join?

As the Race to Zero health care partner, Health Care Without Harm invites health care institutions to join the Race to Zero through our Health Care Climate Challenge initiative.

By joining Race to Zero, health care institutions receive a membership in the [Health Care Climate Challenge](#) and Global Green and Healthy Hospitals (if your institution is not already a member). These networks provide access to a suite of tools, resources and people to assist health care institutions in reducing their carbon footprint, implementing successful sustainability projects and programs, and achieving the ambition of Race to Zero.

To join Race to Zero, institutions are invited to submit a letter stating a commitment to reaching net zero emission by 2050, halving emissions by 2030, and reporting annually on progress towards these goals.

8. What are the required commitments for Race to Zero?

The following commitments are required to participate in the Race to Zero Challenge:

- 2050 or sooner net zero emissions target.
- 2030 emissions reduction targets - 50% of what is measurable which reflects maximum effort toward or beyond a fair share of the global efforts to limit warming to 1.5C for institutions from high-emitting countries. Others should consider a fair share of this target.
- Within 12 months, outline plans which explain what actions will be taken toward achieving both interim and longer-term pledges, especially in the short- to medium-term. In the transition to (net) zero, prioritize reducing emissions, limiting any residual emissions to those that are not feasible to eliminate.
- Take immediate action toward achieving (net) zero, consistent with delivering interim targets specified.
- Commit to report publicly both progress against interim and long-term targets, as well as the actions being taken, at least annually through the Health Care Without Harm Climate Challenge.
- Seek to enable all actors to contribute to the global transition toward (net) zero through engagement, information sharing, access to finance, and capacity building. Develop pledges, plans, and actions in consideration of equity, drawing on, inter alia, the Sustainable Development Goals and Articles 2 and 4 of the Paris Agreement.

9. Can we include offsets?

Offsets can be included for emissions that are particularly hard to reduce but should be systematically minimized. Offsets can only be explored after developing a pathway to zero and only considered for residual emissions that cannot be technically or economically mitigated.

Institutions joining the Race to Zero Challenge are asked to describe any offsets they are using, to demonstrate how their reduction pathways can meet the 50% measurable reductions by 2030, and how they plan to continuously minimize residuals emissions over time. Health Care Without Harm is developing further guidance about the management of residual emissions and the use of offsets.

10. What are the reporting requirements?

All Race to Zero and Climate Challenge members need to annually report their progress through the Climate Challenge platform to actively participate in the initiative.

11. How will our data be used and/or shared?

All data included in the Climate Challenge data collection is confidential to Health Care Without Harm.

Organizations participating in the Race to Zero Challenge can choose whether to be included in the UNFCCC climate action portal. This portal records the commitments of participating organizations and is in the public domain.

12. How will your participation in Race to Zero be recognized?

- We will announce the first Race to Zero for Health Care cohort in a joint Health Care Without Harm - UNFCCC event in the second quarter of 2021.
- We also plan to announce a second cohort and recognize all Race to Zero health care leaders at COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021.
- Health Care Without Harm will establish a zero emissions Climate Leadership Award category for Race to Zero participants.
- Health Care Without Harm will publish case studies on accomplishments by Race to Zero participants.
- Race to Zero participants can choose to be included in the UNFCCC climate action portal.

13. Are there measurement and tracking tools we can use?

Health Care Without Harm will release a health care facility climate footprint measurement tool with emissions factors applicable to most countries in the world in the second quarter of 2021. The tool will be available via the Hippocrates Data Center @ Global Green and Health Hospitals and to U.S. members through Practice Greenhealth.

Annex

Country categories utilized by Health Care Without Harm*:

Top emitters Steep decrease curve 50% by 2030	Major emitters Steady decrease curve TBC	Higher than average emitters Early peak curve TBC	Lower than average emitters Late peak curve TBC
Australia	Cyprus	Brazil	India
Austria	Czech Republic	Bulgaria	Indonesia
Belgium	Estonia	China	Georgia
Canada	Greece	Croatia	Kenya
Denmark	Korea	Hungary	Kyrgyzstan
Finland	Latvia	Mexico	Philippines
France	Lithuania	Poland	Ukraine
Germany	Malta	Romania	Uzbekistan
Ireland	Portugal	Russia	Vietnam
Italy	Slovak Republic	Turkey	Rest-of-World
Japan	Slovenia	Argentina	
Luxembourg	Spain	Chile	
Netherlands	Taiwan	Colombia	
Norway	Israel	Ecuador	
Sweden	Kuwait	Iran	
Switzerland	New Zealand	Kazakhstan	
United Kingdom		Malaysia	
USA		Mauritius	

Singapore		Paraguay	
		Peru	
		South Africa	
		Thailand	
		North Macedonia	
		Uruguay	

*Countries are listed based on the per capita emissions of their national health systems. For more information about this categorization, please see the Global Road Map for Health Care Decarbonization: https://healthcareclimateaction.org/roadmap