

WORLD HEALTH DAY: Protecting health from Climate Change

World Health Day, on 7 April, marks the founding of the World Health Organization (WHO). This year, World Health Day focuses on the need to protect health from the effects of climate change.

The health impacts of climate change are already evident in different ways: more people are dying from excessive heat than before, changes are occurring in the incidence of vector-borne diseases, and the pattern of natural disasters is altering.

Why should you care?

1. Wherever you live, climate change threatens your health. Global warming disrupts some of life's basic requirements for health: water, air and food.

2. Health damage from climate change is already happening. Climate-related injuries and illnesses account for over 150 000 deaths a year.

3. It is projected to get much worse! Rising temperatures and sea levels and extreme weather (heatwaves, floods, droughts, etc.) could lead to severe food and water shortages, loss of homes, mass migrations, death and suffering. Climate-sensitive killers like malaria, undernutrition and diarrhoea are likely to hit harder.

4. The risks are not fairly distributed. Most greenhouse gases that cause climate change originate from richer countries but, unfairly, the health risks are mainly projected to fall on countries that have contributed least to the problem and where malnutrition is already widespread, education is poor, and health system infrastructures are weak.

5. Reducing global warming can be good for health, the environment and the economy! Reducing our carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions (which are causing global warming) through better transport, food and energy use choices can result in more physical activity, less obesity, cleaner air, fewer respiratory diseases, better diets. In addition, the money saved from not having to cover the health-care costs of conditions related to climate change may exceed the costs of tackling the hazardous emissions!

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What can you do to help?

Learn, share and act. <http://www.who.int/phe>

Carry out a personal or community “carbon audit”. You can help prevent future damage by reducing the amount of carbon dioxide you produce through your transport, heating, cooling, lighting and other choices. You can use “carbon calculators” to work out just how much carbon you currently produce, your so-called **carbon footprint** (see <http://actonco2.direct.gov.uk>).

Reduce your carbon footprint. Once you have worked out what your carbon footprint is, develop an action plan to reduce it where needed. If you are a high carbon emitter, you can identify ways to reduce your energy use (and improve your health!) through walking, using public transport, better waste management and choosing products with smaller carbon impact.

Advocate for healthier and fairer climate change policies. While individual action will make a difference, system-level changes will be required to make the kind of carbon reductions needed to protect health. Join with others and work to reduce the carbon footprints of your workplace, community, city, country and the whole world.

Information gathered from: www.who.int/world-health-day

We Are Takers
(W. Brueggemann)

*You are the giver of all good things.
We are takers, who take from you. And then taking more.
Give us peace beyond our fear, and so end our greed.
Give us well-being beyond our anxiety, and so end our fear.
Take our taking into giving ... since we are in your giving image: make us giving
like you, giving gladly, giving in abundance, giving in joy, giving as he gave
himself up for us all, giving, never taking. Amen*