

DID YOU KNOW? ... BY TAKING ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE YOU ARE IMPROVING YOUR HEALTH

WHO message to the public: *You can improve your health, and the health of your community by taking action on climate change. Act Now!*

Why should you care?

- 1. Climate change will affect everyone's health.** Whether you live in a big city, a coastal town, a village or on a small island, climate change threatens your health and well-being. Global warming, induced by climate change, dramatically disrupts some of life's essential requirements for health: water, air and food.
- 2. In fact, it is already affecting public health today.** Already, climate change is estimated to cause 400,000 deaths every year. Climate change affects health in many ways, threatening food and water supplies, exacerbating extremes of temperature, and changing the spread of infectious diseases. If it continues at its current pace, the impacts will worsen, with rising sea levels and extreme weather leading to the loss of homes and livelihoods, mass migration, and civil conflict. These effects are unevenly distributed, with the worst of the impacts felt by those who have done the least to cause climate change: low-income countries and poor and marginalised populations globally.
- 3. It doesn't have to be this way: action now can improve health and tackle climate change.** Many of the causes of ill health – poor diet, polluted air, and a lack of physical activity – are closely linked to excessive fossil fuel combustion and over-consumption. By addressing these root causes we can both improve public health and protect ourselves against the health impacts of climate change.
- 4. Clean air is essential to protect the health of your heart and lungs.** Air pollution can come from many sources, with unclean electricity generation (particularly from coal) and the exhaust from vehicles being two important ones. It has a similar effect to smoking, directly harming your heart and lungs, exacerbating asthma and causing cardiovascular disease and stroke. In 2012, indoor and outdoor air pollution was responsible for 7 million premature deaths.
- 5. You could be missing out on important opportunities to improve your health.** Decisions that we make every day about our transport and diets can help reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions (which cause climate change), and also reduce our risk of diabetes, heart disease, and bowel cancer. In fact, the money saved from not having to cover the health-care costs of conditions related to climate change often matches or exceeds the costs of tackling the hazardous emissions!

What can you do to help?

- 1. Learn, share and act.** Learn more about the health effects of climate change and practical ways to protect health now and into the future. Share this information with family, friends and colleagues – starting a conversation about climate change and human health is an important first step.
- 2. Sign the WHO call to action.**
- 3. Learn about your “carbon footprint”.** Your carbon footprint is a measure of how much CO₂ (one of the most important greenhouse gases) you produce through your transport, heating, cooling, lighting and other lifestyle choices. High carbon footprints are bad for health and the environment. Learn about your own carbon footprint with UNEP’s ‘Carbon Calculator’ app, available on all platforms.
- 4. Start improving your health, now!** Once you have worked out your carbon footprint, develop an action plan to reduce it where needed. If you are a high carbon emitter, you can improve your health and reduce your energy use through cycling, walking, using public transport, better waste management and choosing a healthier, more sustainable diet.
- 5. Protect yourself and your family.** Actions should be focused on current local health threats related to climate change. These will be different depending upon where you live. In areas where malaria may become a greater risk, for example, you can learn to recognize symptoms of disease, form mosquito-watch committees with neighbours, find out about new medicines you may need, and teach your children to take precautions such as applying bug repellents. In areas where heatwaves and other extreme weather conditions are likely to worsen, you can take action to ensure that your homes have adequate ventilation and that necessary hydration and cooling measures will be available, especially for the most vulnerable people.

For more information visit www.who.int/globalchange