



You know there's a problem

You want to do something

But how?

This leaflet will get you started

Planetary Health – How to start taking action

Climate change is the greatest global health threat facing the world in the 21st century¹. We need to act but sometimes it can feel difficult to know where to begin. The BBC documentary, [Climate Change: The Facts](#), provides an excellent overview and sets out some easy key things we can all do.

Don't get overwhelmed. You don't have to do it all. Our lives are busy enough already. Start small and go from there. We don't need a few people tackling this perfectly; we need all of us doing it imperfectly together. This leaflet outlines some achievable actions in our professional and personal lives which can make a difference.

Professional Life

Day to day



Prescribe [prudently](#). Prescribing accounts for >65% of the carbon footprint of primary care². Careful prescribing, instigating regular medication reviews + advising about safe medication disposal can all have a big impact.

Prescribe [greener inhalers](#). Meter-dose inhalers account for ~4% of the entire NHS carbon footprint yet effective alternatives are available².

Encourage active travel e.g. walking + cycling to patients and staff.

Promote medication alternatives e.g. [nature-based interventions](#) and [social prescriptions](#) which have been shown to improve well-being + depression³⁻⁴.

Green Team

- Sign your GP practice up to the [Green Impact for Health Toolkit](#) + use it to help the practice become more eco-friendly
- Set up a Green Team at work + do the toolkit together
- Switch your practice to a [Green Energy supplier](#)



Wider influence

- Talk to everyone you can about Planetary Health and its importance for human health. This [4 min video](#) has tips for how to have conversations about climate change whilst this [article](#) discusses talking to patients.
- Set up a [local Greener Practice group](#) if one doesn't already exist
- Join Green Health Action groups like [Greener Practice](#), [Health Declares](#), [MedAct](#) + [Doctors for XR](#)
- Learn more about the issues e.g. [Introduction to net zero](#); [Sustainable Primary Care](#)

1. Lancet Countdown report 2020
2. Sustainable + environmentally friendly general practice: GPC England policy document – June 2020
3. Robinson J & Breed M 2019, 'Green Prescriptions + their co-benefits: Integrative strategies for public + environmental health', *Challenges 10(1)*
4. Husk K et al 2019, 'Social prescribing: where is the evidence?' *BJGP 69 (678): 6-7*

Personal Life

Calculate your [carbon footprint](#) to see where you can make the biggest changes. Making personal changes can help spark climate conversations. Each paragraph is ordered to have the actions with roughly the biggest impact first.

Home

- Install a renewable energy source e.g. solar panels
- Switch to a [Green Energy supplier](#)
- Ensure your home is well insulated + uses LED bulbs
- The [Energy Saving Trust](#) has lots of home energy advice
- Make your garden [green](#) and [wildlife friendly](#) e.g. plant trees
- Use your local recycling schemes

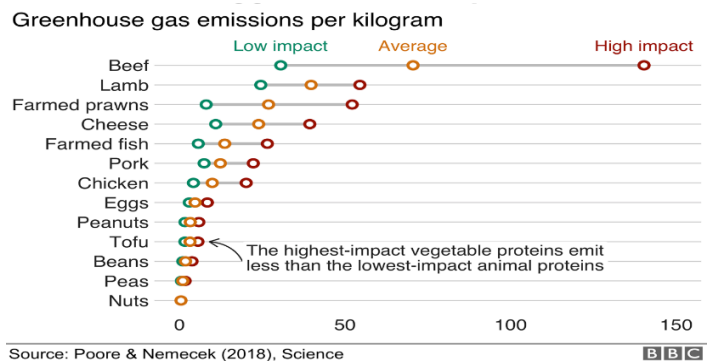


Travel

- [Walk or cycle](#), esp. for short journeys – good for you and good for the planet
- Try an [e-bike](#)
- Minimise flying e.g. take fewer but longer trips abroad; travel by train/boat
- Use public transport for longer journeys
- If a car is essential, use [ecodriving](#) and carpooling
- When your car needs replacing, consider an [electric](#) one

Diet

- Reduce your meat + dairy intake esp. beef
- Try a [plant-based diet](#) e.g., vegan before 6pm, meat-free weeks etc
- Avoid food waste e.g. start a weekly meal plan
- Avoid air freighted food
- Eat seasonally + locally
- Try a weekly fruit + veg box / start a veg patch
- Try a [milk bottle delivery](#) service
- The [EAT lancet](#) report has lots of information on sustainable diets



Finances

- Invest [ethically](#) and ask your pension scheme to [divest from fossil fuels](#)
- Bank with an [ethical bank](#)

Shopping

- Reduce, re-use, re-purpose, re-cycle
- Buy once, buy well...or don't buy at all. E.g. buy a good quality coat which will last years
- Repair e.g. take that coat to be mended
- Buy [preloved](#) / second hand
- Get a [Fair phone](#) which you can repair yourself
- Use [zero-waste](#) shops
- [Ethical Revolution](#) has helpful advice on sustainable shopping

General

- Push for systemic large-scale change and make your voice heard by those in power e.g. contact [your MP](#), use your right to protest
- Get involved in campaigns e.g. [Friends of the Earth](#), [Greenpeace](#)
- [Moral Fibres](#) is a blog based in the UK and has lots of helpful greener lifestyle tips, as does the [Friends of the Earth website](#)