

# 12 things we can do as individuals to become greener



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Individual choice is only one part of what's necessary to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises, but here are some actions you could consider:

## 1. Use your individual voice to harness collective action

Even small changes can be infectious and ripple out in a positive way. Talk about the climate emergency and biodiversity collapse – we in the health professions are in a strong position to do so as we are held in positions of trust by the public and the links between a healthy planet and healthy humans are clear. Consider taking collective action – join a local conservation or green group, or campaign to keep fossil fuels in the ground (as emphasised by the IPCC).

## 2. One step better than recycling

Reduce, Re-use, Repair, Re-purpose, or even Avoid!

## 3. Avoid single use plastic

Microplastics - found throughout the food chain including humans - and pollution from plastics are growing rapidly. Only about 9% of single use plastics are recycled; the rest is burned or dumped. The carbon footprint from bottled water is approximately 500 x greater than tap water (which is also cheaper).

## 4. Reduce fossil-fuel use at home

Ideas around energy use which can be greener and save money include:

- Reducing use (turning things off or down)
- Switching from gas to electric hob
- Switching from gas to electric boiler
- Insulation to reduce cold in winter and over-heating in the summer, and more efficient devices, such as LED light bulbs

[Energy Saving Trust](#)

## 5. Eat less meat and dairy

Only 4% of the world's mammals are wild and this is set to fall further. Humankind and domesticated animals make up the remaining 96%. The growth of domesticated herbivores is one of the greatest threats to the environment in terms of methane generation (one of the most potent greenhouse gases), destruction of natural habitats (UK rivers are increasingly heavily polluted from livestock effluent) and the prevention of return of natural habitats (intensive grazing hampers any prospect of nature recovery). See advice on human- and planet-healthy alternatives, e.g. [the Eatwell Guide](#) and why it is so important [EAT-Lancet Commission Summary Report](#).

## 6. Reduce deforestation, support nature recovery

Avoid (as much as possible) purchases that result in deforestation e.g. those containing palm oil.

Lobby for, and support nature recovery – support your local [Wildlife Trusts](#).

Tree planting around your buildings has a significant cooling effect [NHS Forest](#).

## 7. Move money

Switch your bank to one that does not actively fund fossil-fuels, deforestation or single use plastics, [www.bank.green](http://www.bank.green).

If possible, move to a domestic energy company that uses 100% renewable energy. [Which? Eco Provider energy companies](#)

## 8. Decarbonise your travel

There are huge health advantages from being more active, even walking to and from public transport, compared with driving door to door.

Consider cycling, e-cycling or walking some, or all, of the way to work.

Consider the most carbon friendly way of making a journey, e.g. [route zero](#).

Consider going flight free for one year [Flight Free](#). It is estimated that around 80% of the global population have never set foot on a plane. Taking just one flight can wipe out all the carbon savings made in other areas of our lives.

Consider if feasible to work from home some days.

If you have a car, consider doing without (having a car costs roughly £3000 per year in the UK) or switching to an electric vehicle and sharing it with friends and family for cost saving and more efficient use of a car [Como car sharing](#)

## 9. Generating renewable energy

If you can afford, and have a home suitable for a solar or air/ground source heat pump, consider this as it is likely to save you a substantial sum in the long-term. Alternatively, there are companies like [Ripple Energy](#) that offer investment into renewable energy, that then reduces your electricity bills.

## 10. Buy less

Short use fashion items have a large carbon footprint. Cotton especially has a huge environmental impact. Most new consumable items have a large environmental footprint. Reuse, repair, repurpose and recycle when possible.

## 11. Buy sustainable sourced seasonal food and eat everything you buy

Perishable food (and flowers) flown in, have a huge carbon footprint, but local is not necessarily better. The environmental impact of common foods can be explored, here: [Food: emissions from production and the supply chain \(ourworldindata.org\)](#), whilst BBC Future has a useful personal calculator to guide more planet friendly diets: [Follow the Food | BBC Future](#).

## 12. Develop your own carbon instinct

Worried about which of the above actions to start with? A carbon footprint calculator can help you find your hotspots:

<http://carbon-calculator.climatehero.me/>

[WWF Footprint Calculator](#). Alternatively "[How bad are bananas?](#)" by Mike Berners-Lee, is an easy-read and a good way to help you develop your carbon instinct.

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