5 WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

D id you know that you're already reducing your environmental impact just by being vegan? While the environmental benefits of veganism seem like common sense, a new study conducted by researchers at Oxford University shares the facts and figures of just how important those benefits are. The study, published in the journal Science, looks at the environmental impact of the world's food and concludes that a diet free from animal products boasts the most benefits to the environment.

As one of the most thorough studies to date on the harmful effects animal agriculture has on the environment, the researchers used data from almost 40,000 farms across 119 countries, and states that cutting meat and dairy out of one's diet could reduce a person's food carbon footprint by up to 73 percent.

That's huge! To have even more of an impact, you should consider eating locally-grown produce when possible, as more exotic fruits, such as kiwis, can spend days, even weeks, at sea in refrigerated containers.

We've only got one Planet Earth and we must all do our bit to protect the environment. It really only takes a few small changes in our everyday lives to make a big difference.

1. AIR TRAVEL

Unfortunately for frequent flyers, air travel is one of the biggest culprits for increasing your carbon footprint. You can cut down on the number of flights you take by vacationing closer to home or using online conferencing to cut down on business travel.

2. UNPLUGGING YOUR DEVICES

All electronics suck energy when they're plugged in, even when they're powered down. In the U.S., "vampire power," also known as standby power and phantom load, is responsible for draining up to $19 billion in energy every year. Anytime a cord is plugged into a socket, it's using energy and you're adding to your carbon footprint. Simple solution? Unless you're actively charging your devices, leave your electronics and their chargers unplugged.

3. TRANSPORTATION

Think twice before you get in the car to make a journey; is using the gas-guzzler essential or is there a more eco-friendly way to travel? Walking, cycling, taking public transport, or even carpooling is not only better for the planet, it can also be better for your health. Did you know that the World Health Organization estimates that 1.4 billion (yes, billion) people around the world don't get enough exercise?

4. HEATING YOUR HOME

If your home isn't properly insulated, heat will simply pour out of your windows and doors. Not only will you be wasting energy, you'll be spending a lot more on your utility bills than you should be. While the initial investment of getting new windows or better insulation for your home may be off-putting, you'll be making a positive difference to the planet - and your purse strings - in no time at all!

5. EAT AND DRINK LOCAL AND ORGANIC

Whenever possible, try to eat local, in-season produce. Buying food that is grown locally helps to reduce the carbon footprint created by shipping foods from elsewhere. When a fruit or vegetable can be grown in your own backyard, or a local farm, the environmental cost is significantly reduced. From the transportation costs and fuel used to refrigeration, it all adds up. It's just as important to eat organic produce, which hasn't been sprayed with toxic pesticides that make their way into the water system. Processed and packaged foods are detrimental to the environment as processing plants are major sources of pollution.

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