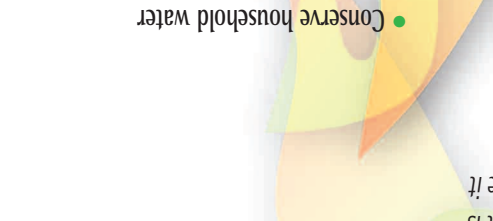
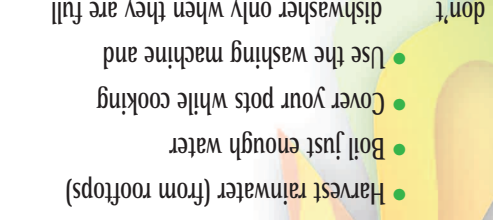
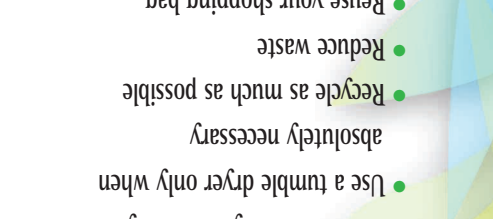
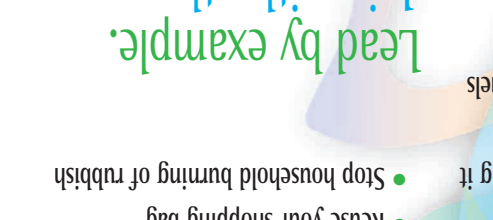




World Health Organization
Regional Office of the
Pan American Health Organization

<http://www.paho.org>



What can I do about climate change?

1. Protect yourself and your family.
Find out about the local and immediate climate change threats to you and your family's health. Take action.

2. Reduce your carbon footprint.
Work out what your carbon footprint is and develop an action plan to reduce it where needed.

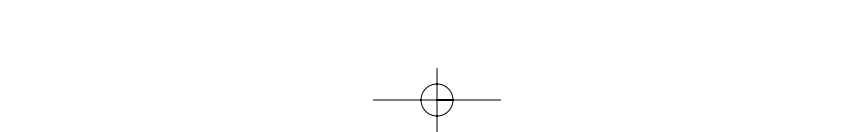
Below are some ways:

- Cycle, walk, car-pool and use public transport
- Avoid short car trips
- Turn down the heat
- Turn down the cold
- Switch off the lights when you don't need them
- Use energy-saving light bulbs
- Do not leave appliances on standby
- Unplug your mobile telephone charger when you are not using it
- Install good home insulation
- Find alternatives to biomass fuels
- Reduce overconsumption of animal products
- Eat local and seasonal produce
- Compost organic waste
- Conserve household water
- Harvest rainwater (from rooftops)
- Boil just enough water
- Cover your pots while cooking
- Use the washing machine and dishwasher only when they are full
- Use a tumble dryer only when absolutely necessary
- Recycle as much as possible
- Reduce waste
- Reuse your shopping bag
- Stop household burning of rubbish

Lead by example.
Join with others.
Reduce our carbon footprint.

Protecting Health from Climate Change

World Health Day
April 7, 2008



World Health Day, celebrated every year on April 7, marks the founding of the World Health Organization and is an opportunity to draw worldwide attention to a subject of major importance to global health.

Celebrating 60 years of the World Health Organization, World Health Day 2008 has been dedicated to Protecting Health from Climate Change.

What is climate change?

The United Nations Convention on Climate Change defines it as “change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.”

Climate change resulting from human action is happening, and the effects can be seen both in the environment (e.g., declining biodiversity, desertification, reduced water availability) and in human health and well-being.

What are the effects of climate change?

Climate change has important socioeconomic impacts on countries’ development and on the health and well-being of their populations. The impacts include disease outbreaks associated with climate change and extreme events, changes in marine and terrestrial ecosystems, and damage to infrastructure. Climate change has a disproportionate impact on poor and vulnerable populations who lack the means to protect themselves.

How does climate change affect health?

The adverse health impacts of climate change can be both direct and indirect. Direct effects result from climatic extremes such as thermal stress and weather disasters. Indirect effects result from climatic influences on vector-borne disease transmission, water- and food-borne disease transmission, and food and water security. Indirect effects also include the consequences of social and economic dislocation, including population displacement.

In the Americas, the major areas of concern are increases in extreme weather events, changes in food supply and nutritional security, changes in water supply, changes in vector-borne disease range and distribution, and rising sea levels. Due to rapid urbanization in the Americas, urban health issues will become increasingly important.

Who are the most vulnerable?

The vulnerability of a population and its capacity to respond to new conditions influences the gravity of the impacts. Effectively targeting prevention or adaptation strategies requires identifying where populations are not able to cope with the effects of climate variability and extremes,

such as floods, droughts, and heat waves. The most vulnerable groups include children under 5, pregnant and lactating women, older adults, marginalized rural and urban populations, indigenous populations, and displaced populations. Vulnerability can be exacerbated by other stressors, such as poverty, food insecurity, conflict, and disease.

What are the options for response?

Societies can actively respond to climate change in two ways: through mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation aims to reduce, delay, or avoid impacts through interventions that reduce the sources of greenhouse gases or that enhance gas-absorbing “sinks.” In public health, this corresponds to primary prevention, which aims to prevent the onset of injury or illness. Adaptation is defined as an adjustment in the natural or human system in response to changes produced by climatic stimuli.

Mitigation and adaptation must occur in civil society, industry, government, and other sectors and must be done in an intercultural way and by increasing citizen awareness. There are many co-benefits and synergies that can be obtained from climate-sensitive choices. For example, walking, cycling, and using mass transportation can reduce not only greenhouse gas emissions but also obesity and osteoporosis, depression and social isolation, and the health effects of air pollution. Understanding these co-benefits—and the positive economic impact small changes can have on the individual—is important for stimulating change.

What are PAHO and WHO doing?

PAHO and WHO are working together on climate change in the Americas and globally, increasing awareness of the health consequences, assessing country-specific risks, strengthening health systems to provide protection from climate-related risks, facilitating the enhancement of public health through decisions on climate change in other sectors, and establishing cross-disciplinary relationships to implement science-based adaptation priorities.

