

How YOU can Affect Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change

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The majority of the scientific community agrees. Man is adversely affecting the environment and accelerating global warming. Greenhouse gases created by our modern lifestyles are blanketing the Earth in a warming cocoon and causing an ugly metamorphosis - a planet riddled with severe weather, animal species extinctions, and an inhospitable environment for future generations.

Governments and industries are not reacting quickly. In our lifetime, the world as we know it may no longer exist. It is up to everyone to start making changes NOW, working together towards a common goal: the preservation of this glorious, beautiful world in which we live.

Quit overstuffing yourself at the table.

Huh? That is a strange statement! How can your eating habits have an effect on greenhouse gases?

There are a growing number of overweight and obese people in the so-called affluent countries. Have you ever considered where all those hamburgers, hot dogs, and chicken nuggets come from? Producers use prime agricultural land to cultivate grass and grain crops for feeding animals in the human food chain.

A single cow needs about five acres of pasture in order to thrive. During its lifetime, a cow can create truckloads of manure - manure that creates a considerable amount of methane (a greenhouse gas). The agricultural land required to raise one cow would feed humans more efficiently when devoted to crops like wheat and soybeans.

The meat we consume goes through several processing stages using a variety of materials - including paper, plastic, Styrofoam, and cardboard. Transportation to the slaughterhouse, processing plant, retail store, and then to the kitchen burns up energy and creates toxic greenhouse emissions.

All that extra food ultimately creates methane gas when it ends up in the sewer. In addition, each extra pound of fat on the body requires more oxygen to maintain, depleting a resource that plant life must replenish.

Give back some of the oxygen you breathe!

Plant life consumes carbon dioxide (a greenhouse gas) and produces life-giving oxygen. However, man clears forests and prime agricultural land to erect ever-higher skyscrapers. If we were to spend more time building down into the ground instead of up into the air or sprawling into the countryside, we would leave more surface area for agriculture and nature. Until architects embrace this concept, we can help replenish a bit of the Earth's oxygen by filling our lives with greenery.

Surround yourself with houseplants. Every balcony can have flowerboxes filled with beautiful oxygen-producing blooms. Apartments with flat roofs can have rooftop gardens. Business people can fill office buildings and retail establishments with live trees, hanging plant baskets, and exotic flowers. Even people with a 'brown thumb' can find easy-to-grow plants like philodendrons, cacti, spider plants, ivies, and African violets.

Reduce the impact of your trash.

Most landfills produce huge amounts of methane. Garbage produces methane gas when it decays in an anaerobic (oxygen-free) environment. Most landfills crush garbage and place it into a plastic-lined pit, then layer the trash with dirt and more garbage.

You can help prevent landfill methane production by composting as much as possible. Just about anything organic is compostable - potato peelings, coffee grounds, unsalted pasta water, moldy baked goods, etc. Avoid large items like whole potatoes and corncobs. You should chop them into smaller pieces before adding them to your compost bin. Avoid meat, oily or fatty substances, or anything prepared with appreciable amounts of salt.

Add finished compost to your houseplants and garden, or use it for lawn top-dressing to create lusciously healthy growth. You can purchase a commercial compost bin at your local department, hardware, or garden supply store. Alternatively, search the Internet for 'plans compost bin construction' if you would like to try building a bin from scratch.

You can add many unusual items to your compost:

1. 100% cotton clothing (no buttons or zippers)
2. 100% wool sweaters or socks
3. brown paper bags
4. burnt toast, cakes, potatoes
5. corked or soured wine
6. crushed eggshells
7. dryer lint
8. feathers and fur
9. hair clippings
10. junk mail (no plastic or metal)
11. leather goods (metal and plastic pieces removed)
12. pasta, cooked or uncooked (without the sauce)
13. shells from almonds, peanuts, and walnuts
14. shredded paper
15. small pieces of cardboard
16. small quantities of expired dairy products
17. tea bags and coffee filters
18. toenail and fingernail clippings
19. vacuum cleaner bags and contents
20. wooden skewers (broken into small pieces)
21. wooden toothpicks

You can locate a more comprehensive list if you search the Net for 'things to add to compost'.

These tips are just a start. Keep watching for further informational articles in the days to come.

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Author's Note:

Kathy is a webmaster and author who writes articles for several sites. You can see more of her work at [111 Travel Directory](#), [1st Rate Articles](#) and [A Language Guide](#). Kathy enjoys writing German-English stories in parallel translation whenever she has a bit of free time.

Author: Kathy Steinemann

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