What You Can Do as a Health Professional
Before and After the Annual Meeting
for the sake of our health and the health of our climate

1. **Contact your mayor, city/county representatives, state representatives, and federal representatives and demand aggressive climate action.**

   Sixty-four percent of Americans view health professionals as a trusted source of information about the health effects of climate change.

2. **Purchase clean energy from your utility company, and ask your employer to do the same.**

   Electricity is responsible for 29 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Coal power plants generate 34 percent of electricity in the U.S. while accounting for 70 percent of the sector’s greenhouse gas emissions. Converting all coal-fired power plants to solar energy would avoid ~52,000 premature deaths in the U.S.

3. **Forgo travel — particularly air travel — when meeting/working online or on the phone will suffice. If you are not able to attend APHA in person, attend virtually.**

   Avoiding air travel avoids the equivalent, on average, of 0.6 tons of CO₂ for a round-trip medium-length flight and 1.6 tons of CO₂ for a round-trip transatlantic flight. The ozone and fine particulate matter air pollution generated by aviation has been linked to up to 1,500 premature deaths and $7 billion in related health costs in North America each year.

4. **Follow Michael Pollan’s mantra — “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.”**

   Agricultural activities account for 8 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. Purchasing local food can reduce your meal’s carbon footprint by up to 11 percent and help maintain the natural balance of local nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus. Organic farming increases the concentration of carbon contained in the soil and reduces exposure to pesticides among vulnerable populations such as children. Shifting to a diet emphasizing fruits, vegetables, nuts and whole grains can lower the risk of cardiovascular disease and reduce your food-related carbon footprint by one-half. Choose free-range or wild-caught fish and follow storage and preparation guidelines to minimize the risk of foodborne disease.

5. **Boycott companies that are impeding climate solutions — Publicly let them know why, as a health professional, you are boycotting them.**

   In 2016, APHA committed to divest from fossil fuels, and the World Medical Association called for divesting fossil fuel companies in favor of renewable energy due to the burden of disease from air pollution: 1 in 8 deaths globally.
References


