

What You Can Do at the Annual Meeting

for the sake of our health and the health of our climate



1. Make low carbon travel choices.

Take public transit, ride-sharing or other low-carbon transportation options to and from the conference (or the airport). Many convention centers are conveniently located along public transportation service lines. If flying to the conference, consider purchasing carbon offsets for your flight. A number of carriers, including [Delta](#) and [United](#), have travel-specific carbon offset tools on their websites. The [Smithsonian Magazine](#), [The Nature Conservancy](#), and [Think Progress](#) have published comprehensive guides to reducing your carbon footprint as an air traveler.



Every mile walked instead of driven avoids [411 grams](#) of CO₂ emissions and [burns 80 of the 140 calories burned through physical activity](#) recommended for adults under the Surgeon General guidelines. A study in San Francisco found that increasing average walking and cycling from 4 to 22 minutes daily reduced both greenhouse gas emissions and the burden of cardiovascular disease and diabetes by 14 percent. However, injuries remain a concern. In the same study, increasing active transportation resulted in a 39 percent increase in incidence of traffic-related injuries.¹



2. Sleep green.

[Book a conference hotel](#) with a sustainability program while registering for the conference. Sustainability efforts work to reduce both the traveler's and the facility's carbon footprints through energy efficiency measures (e.g., turning off the lights, turning down the A/C), water conservation practices (e.g., reusing towels and linens, shortening the length of showers) and waste reduction (e.g., recycling bins, permanently installed shampoo and soap dispensers).



Green hotels help to reduce the estimated [1 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions](#) attributed to the hospitality industry. Reusing towels and linens as a hotel guest can reduce total loads of laundry in the facility by up to 17 percent.²



Many strategies to reduce resource consumption in hotels also enhance health and wellness, such as [improving ventilation](#), using [green cleaning chemicals](#) and instituting [integrated pest management](#) programs, all of which can reduce exposure to toxic chemicals and reduce the risk of exacerbating chronic respiratory diseases.



3. Eat local, organic, and plant-based food.

Select organic, locally grown produce, free-range or “wild-caught” fish and meats and antibiotic-free foods whenever available and financially feasible.



Agricultural activities account for 8 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S.³ Purchasing local food can reduce your meal's carbon footprint by up to 11 percent⁴ and help maintain the natural balance of local nutrients⁵ like nitrogen and phosphorus. Organic farming increases the concentration of carbon contained in the soil⁶ and reduces exposure to pesticides⁷ among vulnerable populations such as children.



Shifting to a diet emphasizing fruits, vegetables, nuts and whole grains can lower the risk of cardiovascular disease⁸ and reduce your food-related carbon footprint by one-half.⁹ Choose free-range or wild-caught fish and [follow storage and preparation guidelines](#) to minimize the risk of foodborne disease.

APHA is committed to supporting policies and practices in the built and natural environment that advance physical and mental health. Through the [joint call to action promoting healthy communities](#), we are working with partner organizations from the built environment sector to accelerate the implementation of health-supportive design. In the global health arena, APHA promotes [access to safe water and sanitation for all](#).

Climate change is a key focus of APHA's environmental health activities.

- The policy statement “[Public Health Opportunities to Address the Health Effects of Climate Change](#)” describes how #ClimateChangesHealth and how public health can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote resilience.
- 2017, the “[Year of Climate Change and Health](#)”, aimed to increase awareness among APHA members and partners about the central role of public health to effect climate change policy and practice: in terms of both mitigation and adaptation.

This document and companion factsheets “[What you can do as a health professional before and after the annual meeting](#)” and “[How APHA is greening the annual meeting](#)” share opportunities for APHA membership to enhance their environmental stewardship, reduce their carbon footprint, and learn about ways that APHA is reducing the environmental impact of the Annual Meeting.



4. Go digital.

Instead of using a printed program for the Annual Meeting, take advantage of full digital access to meeting details through the [online schedule](#) and [meeting app](#). Also, remember to take advantage of the [\\$20 Green Discount](#) on your APHA membership by selecting online-only access to the American Journal of Public Health. If you do use paper products at the event, please take advantage of the many recycling stations in the venue to divert them from the landfill.



Every ton of office paper avoided is equivalent to reducing 0.28 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent, or MMTCE, emissions from the atmosphere and increasing forest carbon storage by 1.9 MMTCE.¹⁰



Forests in the U.S. removed an estimated 17.4 million tons of air pollution in 2010 and avoided an estimated 850 pollution-related deaths.¹¹



5. Ditch the disposables.

Travelers have been found to generate 4.5 times¹² more waste per person at conferences than at home. Bring your own bag, refillable water bottle and coffee cup as a reminder to avoid collecting disposable items that will end up in the trash before you return home. And remember to dispose of any unneeded items that you do collect in one of the many recycling stations in the venue to divert it from the landfill. Leftover APHA bags will be donated to a local organization for reuse.



Carrying a [BPA-free](#) reusable water bottle with you will increase your access to water (and the associated [health benefits](#) of staying hydrated) without contributing to the [2.5 million tons of CO₂ emissions and 17 million barrels of oil](#) associated with producing bottled water each year in the U.S. Only an estimated 6.5 percent of the 28.8 million tons of plastics¹³ (including PET bottles) produced each year are recycled.



Plastic items offered as conference giveaways can release toxic substances such as endocrine disruptors¹⁴ into the environment. [Each pound of plastic](#) recycled or composted is equivalent to not emitting a pound of CO₂ into the atmosphere.



6. Join the conversation.

Use #APHA and #ClimateChangesHealth to see what APHA is doing and how you can get involved.

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