5 best ways to lower your CARBON FOOTPRINT

These easy steps will help to ensure a beautiful future for us and for the coming generations, says Angela Terry, founder of One Home

Everyone has the power to help prevent global warming, and in our high-consumption society, millions of people making small lifestyle tweaks adds up to a big change. If everyone took these five steps in 2020, we would be on track to limit warming to the 'safe' level of 2 degrees.

1 SWITCH TO RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY

Using renewable electricity could reduce your carbon footprint by 1.3 tonnes of CO_2. If you can afford solar panels, they would save 1.3 tonnes of CO_2 per year but cost around £6,000 to install. Another way is to switch to a green electricity tariff that buys energy from wind farms and other low-carbon sources of power generation.

2 EAT GREEN FOOD

The meat industry generates nearly 20% of man-made greenhouse gases that are accelerating climate change. That's because meat production is very inefficient and requires masses of grain, water and land – producing just 1kg of beef requires 25kg of grain and around 15,000 litres of water. Cows also produce methane, a greenhouse gas that's 20-25 times more powerful than CO_2, so that means cheese, which uses 10lb of milk per pound of cheese, is a problem too. Begin with 'meat-free Mondays' then try to reduce meat in your diet further. We could shed close to a fifth (17%) of greenhouse gas emissions from food if we followed a healthy recommended diet, including more fruit, veg and nuts, and less meat and dairy.

3 INSULATE YOUR HOME PROPERLY

In the UK, we each produce just over 11 tonnes of CO_2 on average. You can reduce this carbon footprint by 2.2 tonnes a year with adequate insulation. If you have no loft insulation, you could save just under 1 tonne of CO_2 each year for a detached home by fitting insulation/mineral wool to a depth of 27cm. And, if you have cavity walls, filling them with insulation will save just over 1 tonne of CO_2 each year.
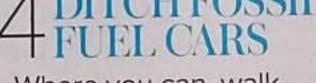
4 DITCH FOSSIL FUEL CARS

Where you can, walk, cycle or get public transport. Otherwise, switch to an electric vehicle, which you can buy or lease. Sales of alternatively fuelled cars are booming, and while a hybrid is better than a fossil fuel car, pure electrics are best. The Government is also planning to issue green-coloured number plates for electric cars, with benefits such as free parking. The price difference between buying an electric car is now on average only £1,500, as you're entitled to a government grant of £3,500. They also save money, as electric vehicles cost 4p a mile while petrol cars are more like 15p a mile. You can reduce your carbon footprint by 1.2 tonnes by switching to an electric car, or 2.4 tonnes by living car-free.

5 HOLIDAY CLOSE TO HOME

Staycations are on the rise and there are so many amazing holiday experiences to choose from that enjoy all the benefits of flight-free trips – no queues, germs or jet lag. If you're travelling beyond the UK, ferry routes to mainland Europe and the Eurostar offer a gateway to many destinations. If you take lots of foreign holidays, try to cut down and include more destinations closer to home. Long-haul flights have the highest carbon footprint – a holiday to Sydney, Australia, with a stopover in Dubai, creates a shocking 11 tonnes of CO_2.

IT'S TIME TO DITCH...

✛ SINGLE-USE PLASTIC According to the United Nations, every year plastic kills more than a million seabirds and 100,000 sea mammals, marine turtles and countless fish. Use beeswax wraps instead of clingfilm, buy loose fruit and vegetables, and carry a reusable water bottle.

✛ FAST FASHION (clothes you'll only wear a few times) Textile production produces 1.2 billion tonnes of CO_2 a year – that's more than international flights and maritime shipping combined**. Instead, host a clothes swap, buy second-hand or buy fewer items and wear them more.

✛ NON-BIODEGRADABLE WIPES Wet wipes make up 90% of the material causing UK sewage blockages, according to a 2017 report by Water UK. Use flannels instead – even better, recycle old towels by cutting them into squares.
✛ For more tips and practical advice, visit onehome.org.uk **w&h**