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January 7, 2020



## Your monthly dose of *good news* about climate change.

Happy New Year! Have you made a New Year's resolution? If so, chances are you want to be more fit or save more money, but everyone knows making good on them ain't easy. This month's issue offers tips to transform your resolutions into a personal climate action plan that can save money and make you healthier in 2020.

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## Small Actions Inspire Bigger Ones

We can stay healthy, save money, and beat carbon pollution without making sacrifices. Small changes that require a little creativity or curiosity can make big impacts.

While some scoff at individual actions, labeling them as inconsequential, many small actions can—and do—inspire bigger ones.

When we take actions in our own lives to reduce fossil fuel consumption, we send a signal that we can do so and still live well. We also show that we care about climate, our health, and our children's future. This New Year, consider how your resolutions can become a personal climate action plan. Together, we can spark a more widespread aspiration to live without fossil fuels and support bigger and bolder climate actions.



## Shrink Food Waste

First, let's take food. Food waste is a staggering problem. If "Food Waste" were a nation, it would be the third largest carbon polluter in the world, after only the U.S. and China.



Our food system uses tons of fossil fuels for fertilizers, pesticides, farm equipment, transportation, refrigeration, and more. So when food gets wasted, so does its embedded carbon. In the U.S., most of the wasted food comes after it is sold at a market, when it rots in our refrigerators or gets pitched by restaurants.

**Here's a menu of options to eat healthier and reduce wasted food in your life:**

**At home**, create a weekly food plan. Make a list of what ingredients you'll need, then shop your fridge and cupboards before you go to the store. For more ideas, check out EPA's [tips to reduce food waste](#) at home.

**At work**, ask about plans to address wasted food in your cafeteria or with catered lunches. Many resources can help organizations reduce food waste, such as on [Refed](#) or [WRI](#)'s websites.

**If you find yourself at an all-you-can-eat buffet**, swap the tray for a smaller plate. This will help nudge you towards manageable portion sizes that don't get left uneaten at the end of the meal. Good for the planet and your health, too!

## Rethink Transportation

For most Americans, leading sources of energy consumption are in gas for our cars and heating fuels in our homes. To reduce your reliance on cars, there are small changes you can make to shrink your impact on the world, your wallet, and your waistline:

**Switch up your commute once a week:** Can you work from home, carpool, take public transit, or bike to work one day per week? Research suggests that building activity into your day by trading car commutes for public transit, walking, or biking [can lead to weight loss](#).

**Consider using flex time:** If your workday can be flexible, you can avoid the stress of traffic while also reducing your carbon emissions by leaving before or after rush hour.

**If you are buying a new car:** Go for the most fuel-efficient model that makes sense for your family and don't rule out electric vehicles, which are increasingly affordable, have longer ranges, and are really fun to drive. Remember that you may be eligible for major tax breaks from the federal government and in many states for the purchase of an electric vehicle.



## Keep Heat In And Energy Waste Out

Many homes lose 25% of their heat, which is literally money out the door. Fortunately, there are some easy ways to reduce energy waste in your home, saving you money and reducing your carbon footprint.



**Get an energy audit:** Many states have excellent programs to help homeowners find where energy is wasted and give incentives to make repairs. These programs can also help offset the cost of new boilers, water heaters, air conditioning units, and much more.

**Use a programmable thermostat:** You can easily lower your temperature setting in colder weather (and raise it in warmer weather) when you're asleep or away. If you don't have a programmable thermostat, many of the state energy programs will subsidize those, too. In cold months, reducing the temperature by 7-10 degrees for 8 hours a day can save you 10% on your energy bill .

**Unplug unused appliances:** You might be surprised by how much energy our electronics draw even when we are not using them. You can save money and watts by unplugging counter-top appliances, computers, and entertainment systems when not in use. Programmable power strips can help you schedule on/off times, and electricity usage monitors can help you measure how much each appliance uses.

Money isn't the only thing we save when we use less energy at home. Burning less gas and coal means there's less air pollution and better health for everyone downwind of a power plant—which is, surprisingly, most everyone in the country.

If you liked this month's *Climate Optimist* , you'll love our Director Dr. Aaron Bernstein's monthly column in *Coverage* , a Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts news service. We adapted his latest article for this issue. [Be sure to check it out!](#)

**Save the Date: April 15, 2020**



## Confronting the Climate Crisis: Choosing a Healthier Future



To commemorate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and to prepare for the next 50 years, we're hosting a half-day symposium on tackling the climate crisis to address our health emergency and the leaders who are driving the movement.

Christiana Figueres, the former executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, will keynote .

1:00 pm - 6:30 pm, Boston.

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