

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS MAKE US HEALTHIER PEOPLE

Human health is connected to the environment. We require specific conditions in order to thrive on our planet. These include clean air, fresh water, food, fuel, protection from UV radiation, and a relatively stable climate. These conditions are known as ecological determinants of health. When these determinants are threatened, our health is too.

Now you might be thinking “that’s a no-brainer – everyone knows that” but have you ever wondered how you as one individual can influence such large global issues?

I find it helps to think of two levels: personal health and global health. Both are important and we can make changes that improve both levels either separately or simultaneously.

You could make a personal level health goal like walking for an hour on Saturday mornings with the dog. Walking regularly is proven to reduce your risk of chronic diseases. You could also make a global health goal, like moving closer to your place of work so that you don’t need to drive to work. When you drive less often your fossil fuel consumption decreases and that helps improve air quality. You can also combine personal and global goals for maximum impact. Setting a goal like biking to work three days a week is good for your body, your wallet, and the planet!

We can start small and work our way up to larger actions. Try buying honey from a local, environmentally-minded bee keeper instead of buying imported sweeteners. Starting to compost at home helps reduce the amount of waste that ends up in landfills. Xeriscaping our properties reduces water usage. We can also encourage larger change by advocating for policies and programs that help protect our environment such as initiatives aimed at reducing carbon emissions.

Big change starts with small steps. Protecting our environment and our health is something we all can do.