

Students ate less meat in the three years after hearing talk on its negative environmental impacts

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A trio of climate scientists from Occidental College, Claremont Graduate University and the University of California, respectively, has

found that after a 50-minute talk outlining the negative environmental impacts of raising and consuming meat, students ate on average 9% less meat over the following three years. In their paper published in the journal *Nature Food*, Andrew Jalil, Joshua Tasoff and Arturo Vargas Bustamante describe analyzing the eating habits of student volunteers.

Prior research has shown that meat [consumption](#) and the activities that allow for it constitute approximately 15% of all [greenhouse gas emissions](#). Past studies have shown that one way to reduce meat consumption is to educate consumers on the magnitude of the problem and the ways that it can be reduced. For their project, the researchers partnered with an unnamed residential U.S. college to learn more about the impact of information exchange on behavior regarding global warming.

Notably, the World Resources Institute recently released its [State of Climate Action in 2022](#) report, noting that if meat consumption worldwide could be slashed by an amount equal to two hamburgers per person, it would go a long way to reducing global warming.

The researchers recruited 213 students to participate in their study that began in the fall of 2017. The volunteers were divided into test and control groups. All of the subjects attended a 50-minute talk outlining the negative environmental impacts of [meat consumption](#), including forest clearing to create more grazing land, the massive amounts of water needed to raise livestock and the huge amounts of methane generated by meat animals. In the talk, they also pointed out negative health consequences of eating [meat](#), such as an increased risk of heart disease. The control group listened to a talk unrelated to food choices.

The researchers followed up the talk by tracking meal selections made by the volunteer students in the school cafeteria over the ensuing three years. The researchers found that the test group ate 11% less beef, 9%

less poultry and 9% less fish-based meals. They also ate 20% more vegetable-based dishes.

More information: Andrew J. Jalil et al, Low-cost climate-change informational intervention reduces meat consumption among students for 3 years, *Nature Food* (2023). [DOI: 10.1038/s43016-023-00712-1](https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-023-00712-1)

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