

Experts call for health and climate change warning labels on petrol pumps

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Warning labels should be displayed on petrol pumps, energy bills, and airline tickets to encourage consumers to question their own use of fossil fuels, say health experts in *The BMJ* today.

Like [health warnings](#) on cigarette packets, the labels should state clearly that continuing to burn [fossil fuels](#) worsens the climate emergency, with major projected [health impacts](#) increasing over time.

Dr. Mike Gill, a former regional director of public health and colleagues argue that telling consumers at the point of use about the climate and health risks that come with burning fossil fuels could change attitudes and behaviour.

Their call is part of a special collection of articles on planetary health, published by *The BMJ* today to raise awareness of the threats to humanity and natural systems and to identify opportunities for action.

Gill and colleagues point out that, like smoking, fossil fuel use harms others through ambient air pollution that accounts for about 3.5 million premature deaths per year, as well as through climate change, which increasingly threatens the health of current and future generations.

And while fossil fuel use is already subject to [government intervention](#) in many countries, for example through fuel taxes and vehicle emissions standards, "these are insufficient to prevent dangerous [climate change](#) and do not reflect the full economic costs of burning fossil fuels," they write.

"Warning labels connect the abstract threat of the [climate emergency](#) with the use of fossil fuels in the here and now."

They acknowledge that implementing warnings will face challenges, but say the initial focus should be on high income nations that have contributed disproportionately to greenhouse gas emissions and on major sources of greenhouse gas emissions in emerging economies where they are rising rapidly.

Additional policies could also include increasing restrictions on advertising by fossil fuel companies, particularly to prevent misleading claims about investments in renewable energy when these represent a minority of their portfolio.

They call on governments to take urgent, decisive steps to raise awareness of personal choices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as implementing national policies to decarbonise the economy.

"There is an opportunity for national and local governments to implement labelling of fossil fuels in the run-up to COP26 in Glasgow and in particular for the UK Government, as the host of the COP, to show leadership, as part of a package of measures to accelerate progress on getting to 'Net Zero' emissions," they write.

"When the covid-19 pandemic eventually wanes, labelling could play an important role in helping to reduce the risk of a rapid rebound in greenhouse gas emissions as the economy expands," they conclude.

More information: Opinion: We need health warning labels on points of sale of fossil fuels , [blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2020/03/31/w ... sale-of-fossil-fuels](https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2020/03/31/w...sale-of-fossil-fuels)

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