**What is coral bleaching?**

When corals are under heat, they expel the algae that live in their tissues. Without these algae, corals’ tissues become white, revealing their skeleton. This is the basic process of coral bleaching. Though it may seem bizzare but, bleached corals are not dead. In fact, they are just more vulnerable and fragile to starvation and they are more prone to perish.

Unfortunately, coral bleaching is much more than aesthetic loss. Almost %25 of the marine creatures depend on coral reefs. Likewise, more than 500 millions of human also depend on coral reefs for income, food etc. So as you see, coral reefs are quite vital to life on earth.

**What triggers coral bleaching?**

Predictably, the leading cause of coral bleaching is rising ocean temperatures due to climate change. A temperature rising about 1°C is able to cause bleaching and since 1900 the ocean’s temperature has warmed by 1°C. Taking into account the fact that oceans are absorbing %93 of the extra heat from greenhouse gases, coral reefs are inclined to bleach readily. And it is more probable for us to encounter more bleaching events.

**Great Barrier Reef**

It is one of the Australia’s most outstanding natural sights. The Great Barrier Reef has the gorgeous beauty of the world’s largest coral reef. The reef contains a plethora of marine life and also it is larger than the Great Wall of China and the only living thing that is visible from the space. But there is a problem. It is also bleaching. Mass bleaching events on the Great Barrier Reef have been documented in 1998, 2002, 2016, 2017, 2020 and 2022 with many smaller bleaching events around those times. In 2022, the fourth mass bleaching event since 2016, more than %90 of reefs surveyed along the Great Barrier Reef were affected by this coral bleaching event. So as you see it is under a big pressure.

**Solutions**

Even if coral reefs are maintained to bleach by global warming, it is not late to recover coral reefs. If conditions return to normal and stay that way, corals can regain their algae and survive from perishing. We have to reduce our carbon pollution and limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees. It can take decades for coral reefs to fully recover from a bleaching event, so it is crucial that these events do not occur frequently. If we continue burning fossil fuels at our current rate then severe bleaching events are likely to hit reefs annually by the middle of the century. Moreover, this would not only be devastating for coral reefs but also for all the ecosystems of World..

**What can we do to deter bleaching?**

* **Spread the issue!**

**Educate your family and friends about coral reefs and search if there is a similar event in your area, what your state is doing to prevent bleaching and what kind of precautions should be taken**

* **Do not send chemicals into the sea, ocean**

**Nutrients from excess fertilizer increases algae growth that block sunlight to corals**

* **Volunteer**

**If you are located near the coast, you can get involved in protecting the coral reefs by cleaning local beaches**

* **Check sunscreen ingredients**

**Choose sunscreens with chemicals that do not harm marine life**

* **Do not touch corals when you dive**

**Know that they are alive and mixed sediments can smother them. So try to be cautious when diving**