



TIPS AND ADVICE ON MAKING YOUR HOME MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY AS WELL AS CLEANER AND HEALTHIER FOR YOUR FAMILY.

Use Fluorescent Bulbs

Replace conventional incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). They cost a little more, but last up to 10 times longer; they use two-thirds less energy and give off 70 percent less heat.

Look for the Energy Star Label when purchasing appliances

Energy Star-qualified refrigerators use about half as much energy as refrigerators made before 1993, and saving energy also cuts down on pollution. Look for Energy Star certification when shopping for other home appliances such as dishwashers, clothes washers, water heaters and many home electronics. Visit www.energystar.gov/ for more information about this program.

Get Unplugged

Many home electronics still consume energy even when they are turned off. Many devices with a "standby mode" will continue to use power, running up your electricity bill. Also, chargers and power adapters continue to draw power from the wall socket even if the device is not attached. Unplug these devices or use a power strip to turn off multiple units, when they aren't being used to make sure that you aren't wasting energy.

Turn Down the Thermostat

Lowering your thermostat by just one degree during colder months can reduce costs by about four percent, so keeping the heat turned down just a little bit can reduce energy costs. Using a ceiling fan in the summer and the winter can also help with A/C and heating energy consumption.

Low-Flow Faucets and plumbing fixtures

Low-flow water fixtures such as showerheads, faucets and toilets reduce water consumption and water heating costs by as much as 50 percent. According to the U.S. EPA, a family of four could save more than 16,000 gallons of water per year simply by replacing a traditional toilet with a high-efficiency toilet. You may also want to consider a tankless hot water heater. While these can add several hundred dollars to

your bill, tankless water heaters use 20 percent less energy than traditional water heaters, paying for the extra up-front cost in just a few years.

Buy Renewable Energy

Check with your local utility company (and HOA Company) and see if you can purchase renewable energy. Renewable, non-emitting sources such as wind, solar and hydroelectric power cut down on emissions, reduce volatile fuel prices and can save you money.

Recycle!

After you replace all those inefficient products and fixtures, make sure you recycle all that metal and glass. Also, most household paper items, glass, aluminum cans and plastic can be recycled. By recycling half of your household waste, you can save 2,400 pounds of carbon dioxide annually. Find more information about programs in your area at www.recycle.com/.

Ditch the Paper Towels

Instead, pick up micro-fiber cloth towels to use all around the house. Thousands of tiny little fibers literally grip and hold onto the dirt and bacteria. The best part? They are machine-washable, so you can use them over and over again. Just spray a surface with a non-toxic, all-purpose cleaner and wipe away with the micro-fiber towels.

Java Scrub

The next time you brew a cup of fresh coffee at home, don't toss the used coffee grinds into the trash. First, spoon some warm grinds into your hands and mix it with your favorite hand soap. Now scrub away. The grinds will exfoliate dead skin off your hands and the soap will keep everything squeaky clean. Scatter the remaining grinds around your evergreen shrubs and trees – it's an energizing fertilizer for them!

Soy Candles

When burning candles around the house be sure to choose clean-burning soy candles. Traditional candles are paraffin-based, which is made from non-renewable petroleum. When burned they emit soot and smoke into the air, polluting your indoor air. Soy candles are a much cleaner choice and made from – you guessed it – soy beans! They're easy to find and the best part is they burn longer than paraffin candles, so you get more soothing scents for your cents. One final tip: Place unlit soy candles in your sock drawer to gently scent them.

Put Your Computer to Sleep

Remove the screen saver off your computer. When those flying toasters are activated on your screen, the computer is still running on full power. Instead, put your computer in "sleep" or "standby" mode, so the stroke of a key will wake up your PC right away. You can also save energy at your workplace by making sure your co-

workers aren't leaving their computers on all night long. Make it a corporate policy to have all computers shut down at the end of the work day.

Recycle Your Cell Phone

Bring your old cell phones to a Call2Recycle box. It's a non-profit program from the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation; they'll recycle your phone for free into new metal products. You'll find these collection boxes in stores like Radio Shack, Best Buy and The Home Depot. You can learn more at www.call2recycle.org.

Make Donations

If you're trying to find a new home for a piece of furniture, a bag of clothes, an old chandelier or anything that's hard to recycle, give FreeCycle a try. This free website connects people with things to give away with people who need those things. It's organized by ZIP codes, so it will put you into contact with groups in your community. No money can ever exchange hands and everything has to be totally free. You can learn more at www.freecycle.org.

CLEAN GREEN

Replace the harsh chemicals you use to clean tubs and toilets. Pay attention to the government-mandated warning labels on cleaning products; the terms used, from least to most toxic, are "caution," "warning" and "poison/danger." Aim for products that say "caution" only, or seek out environment-conscious brands.

You should note that amid this rush to use environmentally friendly cleaners, some are advising buyers beware.

Urvashi Rangan, an eco-product watchdog at the independent, nonprofit Consumer Policy Institute, points out that, unlike the organic food industry which has recently been partly regulated, so far the business of eco-cleaners is completely unregulated.

Phrases like biodegradable, nontoxic, hypoallergenic and fragrant free -- all of those things technically don't have to mean anything," she said. "Manufacturers can use these claims and don't have to meet any standard, and they don't have to be verified."

Rangan adds that, unlike food companies, cleaning-product companies aren't required to list ingredients in their labeling. She advises that customers select natural cleaning products that voluntarily list all ingredients on their labels -- and choose eco-cleaning services that identify all their cleaning products as all-natural.

Lest you think all-natural cleaners can't do tough jobs, try this solution for clogged drains: pour a cup of dry baking soda down the drain followed by three cups of boiling water. If the clog doesn't dislodge, follow with a cup of vinegar. The fizzy reaction should overpower even the most stubborn clogs.

THINK ORGANIC COTTON

Bath linens made from organic cotton are not only comfy and soft, but they require less pesticide to produce than regular cotton towels. Manufacturers that use the slightly more expensive organic cotton also tend to use natural dyes and softeners that are less toxic to the environment than man-made chemicals and are gentler on sensitive skin.

Ventilation

A vent fan is a must to remove odors, airborne irritants and moisture that can lead to mold problems. To be truly effective, a vent fan should be left on for at least 20 minutes after a shower, so consider a timer that will ensure it runs long enough to remove all the moisture. Look for versions of less than one sone (a sone is the unit of measure for the level of sound put out by a vent fan). If space and design permit, include an operable window for natural ventilation and daylight. Make sure the window is well-insulated.

Greywater recycling

These systems collect and filter water from sinks, tubs, showers and the laundry (called grey water) and re-use it to irrigate landscapes or even to flush toilets. These systems range from the very simple to the very complex and are not accepted by all code jurisdictions, so do your homework first.

Toss the air fresheners and disinfectants

According to a study published in New Scientist in 1999, in homes where aerosol sprays and air fresheners were used frequently, mothers experienced 25 percent more headaches and were 19 percent more likely to suffer from depression, and infants under six months of age had 30 percent more ear infections and 22 percent higher incidence of diarrhea.

You live in a house, not a hospital. Disinfectants are a waste of money and many contain toxins and highly caustic chemicals. The EPA classifies disinfectants as pesticides because they kill microbes. Washing your hands with soap and water will effectively prevent disease. Keeping your cutting boards clean will also keep you healthy. Many chefs recommend having separate cutting boards for meat, vegetables and cheeses to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.

Tips and advice provided by the following website:

<http://www.hgtv.com>

<http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/Business/story?id=1544322>

<http://www.grist.org/advice/possessions/2003/03/18/possessions-cleaning/index.html>

<http://www.coolpeoplecare.org/article/2007/03/16/how-clean-your-house/>