

TEN EASY WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR CHEMICAL FOOTPRINT



1. Don't buy antibacterial soap! The American Medical Association recommends against the use of antibacterial soap in the home because it contains the chemical triclosan. All soap is equally effective at cleaning your skin and eliminating bacteria. Look for soap that does not have "triclosan" listed on the label. It makes bacteria stronger, poisons fish downstream and is linked to thyroid disorders.

2. Don't buy toothpaste that contains triclosan. Check the ingredients before you buy toothpaste. Triclosan can enter your bloodstream through your gums. Triclosan isn't necessary to clean your teeth or gums.

3. Avoid fragrances. "Fragrance" on an ingredient label indicates artificial fragrance. Products without "fragrance" listed as an ingredient are easy to find. Buy soap, shampoo and lotions that are unscented, or that are scented with essential oils, instead of artificial fragrance. Many kinds of artificial fragrances are suspected to be harmful to fish and do not readily biodegrade.

4. Buy fresh food instead of packaged food. The inside of metal food cans contain a lining that uses bisphenol A (BPA). The FDA recently expressed concern over "the potential effects of BPA on the brain, behavior, and prostate gland of fetuses, infants and children."

5. Avoid food that contains preservatives. Chemical food preservatives such as butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA) and methylparaben are listed on the ingredient label, so they're easy to avoid. These chemicals end up in the environment and may pose environmental health risks.

6. Wash your laundry with half the detergent you use now. Laundry detergents often contain harmful chemicals such as artificial fragrances. Your clothes will get just as clean with less detergent. Let your clothes soak before you turn on the washer and spot-clean stains to further reduce the need for detergent.

7. Wear your clothes more between washing. This will increase the life of your clothes, and protect the environment from the chemicals in your detergent. Steaming or hanging previously worn clothes in the bathroom while you shower can freshen the fabric and get out wrinkles.

8. Wash your hair less often. Many shampoos and conditioners contain chemicals that are toxic to the environment. By washing less often, you can reduce your exposure to chemicals and keep your hair healthier.

9. Switch to non-toxic household cleaners. When you clean your home, use non-toxic cleaners like vinegar and baking soda. If you use a housecleaning service, talk to your housecleaner about using non-toxic household cleaners or switch to a non-toxic service.

10. Only run your dishwasher when it's full. You've heard this tip before for water and energy conservation, but it also will improve downstream water quality by contributing fewer chemicals to the water stream.