

Easy Ways to “Go Green” and Keep Your Family and Community Safe, Clean and Healthy!

Minimize Driving: Walk or use public transportation instead

The fumes from your car contribute toxic fumes and particles to the air. These fumes hurt the environment and can have adverse effects on children’s health. As summer approaches, take advantage of the warmer weather and walk or use the subway instead of driving, to get to work or to run errands.

Avoid Bottled Water: Use a water filter instead

BRITA water filters can be purchased at local grocery or drug stores. This will help the environment and save you money!

Minimize Wasted Water

Turn of the faucet while you are brushing your teeth or washing your hair. This will help conserve hundreds of gallons of water over the course of a year.

Remember the 3 “Rs”: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle

- **Reduce** the amount of “stuff” you use; whether it be less toilet paper, using less water, or turning off the lights before you leave your home.
- **Reuse** your things! Plastic bags, cardboard coffee cup holders, and paper with print on one-side can all be reused at least a second time.
- **Recycle!** Remember, the following products are all recyclable:
 - Aluminum Cans, Cardboard, Plastic Bottles (including Shampoo Bottles, Milk Containers, and Laundry Detergent Bottles), Yogurt Containers, Grocery Bags, and Packing Peanuts

Be Tech Savvy:

A laptop computer uses half the amount of energy as its desktop counterpart. Searching for a new computer? Think about going the smaller route.

Eat Locally:

Most of our food travels over 1500 miles to get to our grocery stores. This results in excess pollution and fuel. Therefore, use local green markets, food stands, and farmer markets to purchase food.

This will help conserve fuel, reduce pollution, and you will enjoy fresher food products!

Sources: Columbia Center for Children’s Environmental Health: www.cceh.org, The Green Guide: <http://www.thegreenguide.com/>, Real Simple: <http://www.realsimple.com/realsimple/package/0,21861,1692674-1604538-1,00.html>, NRDC: www.nrdc.org/greenliving

Just as it is important to conserve resources and work together as a community to help the Earth, it is also important to reduce exposures to toxins, particularly for children, in your environment. The Columbia Center for Children’s Environmental Health is researching how exposures to different environmental pollutants affect child health. Using research and our knowledge of the environment, we have put together a few suggestions and tips on how to minimize exposure to common urban pollutants that can affect children. We’ve also included other resources that we hope you use as Earth Day approaches! Please also visit our website at www.ccceh.org for more information on the environment and children’s health.

AIR POLLUTION and SECONDHAND SMOKE

CCCEH researchers have found that prenatal and early life exposure to secondhand smoke and air pollution from diesel exhaust and fuel burning by cars, trucks, buses, and home heating negatively affects child health. Scientists have found that babies who are exposed in the womb to high levels of both air pollution and secondhand smoke are often born smaller than babies exposed to lower levels of these pollutants (Perera, et al, 2003). Similarly, babies exposed in the womb to secondhand smoke and air pollution have been shown to have developmental delays at age 3 (Perera, et al, 2006), as well as experience breathing problems at age 2 (Miller, et al, 2004). It is clear that air pollution and secondhand smoke can be harmful to young children. The following are tips you can follow to minimize exposure to these pollutants and keep your family healthy!

- Don’t Smoke. If you or a family member must smoke, do not allow smoking in closed spaces such as the home or car when pregnant women and children are present.
- Help friends and family quit smoking. To quit smoking, call:
 - Smoking Cessation Clinic at Columbia University (212-543-5905)
 - Smoking Cessation Program at Lincoln Hospital/Morrisania Diagnostic and Treatment Center (718-579-4934)
 - New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (311)
- Join a clean air campaign in your community to help reduce air pollution. To join a clean air campaign:
 - Visit the National Resources Defense Council website at: <http://www.nrdc.org/action/>
 - Visit the WE ACT for Environmental Justice website, at: <http://www.weact.org/GetACTive/SupportaCampaign/tabid/301/Default.aspx>
 - Visit the “Clean Air NY” website, at: <http://cleanairny.org/exthome.htm>

- Community activism can help get cleaner buses on local streets and prevent pollution sources from being put in your neighborhoods, such as diesel bus depots and waste transfer stations.

PESTICIDES

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a safe and good way to keep your home free of pests and toxic pesticides. During pregnancy, IPM reduces pests in your home and the level of harmful pesticides you breathe that can reach your unborn baby. Using IPM after pregnancy keeps your child safe from pesticides that may harm early development.

IPM WORKS & IS EASY TO USE

Use Low-Toxicity Cleaning Products

- ✓ Clear general clutter from kitchen area
- ✓ Use low-toxicity, citrus-based cleaning products.

Apply Low-Toxicity Pest Control Products

- ✓ Place **glue traps, gels & bait stations** for cockroaches and **sticky traps** for mice around your home. Follow all directions on product labels

Make Minor Apartment Repairs

- ✓ Seal pest entry points with caulking compounds, copper mesh and/or metal screens.
- ✓ Buy caulk, mesh, and screens at your local hardware store. Ask your landlord to help make repairs.

Family Teamwork

- ✓ Everyone needs to pitch in. Remind family members to eat only in the kitchen, clean up food spills quickly, and remove garbage from home each day.
- ✓ Talk to your family about safe pest control products. Everyone should agree not to use pesticide sprays or let exterminators treat the apartment.

MERCURY

We want to help keep your family healthy. Mercury is in many products we use, the air we breathe, and in fish. The good news is much of it can be avoided. We would like to show you how to avoid mercury when cleaning up a small mercury spill. If you drop or spill anything with mercury in it (a thermometer, azogue, or through another source), follow these steps:

10 TIPS – WHAT TO DO if you have a SMALL mercury spill at home

1. **Open a window** and run a fan to get vapors out of your home.
2. **Keep children away** from the spill area.
3. **Remove any metal jewelry that you are wearing** before cleaning up a spill. Mercury is a metal and may stick to your jewelry.
4. **Wear rubber gloves** when cleaning up the spill.
5. **Carefully pick up any broken glass** (from thermometers or light bulbs). Use sticky tape to help pick up small pieces. Put glass in a plastic bag and tie up tight.
6. **Scoop up mercury drops with a stiff piece of paper**. Sticky tape also helps to pick up small droplets. Put mercury in a plastic bag and tie up tight.
7. **Shine a flashlight around the spill area** to find smaller drops. Use a cloth rag to clean up.
8. **Throw away rags, paper, and tape** used to clean up the mercury. Put all in a plastic bag and tie up tight.
9. **Use a heavy plastic trash bag to double bag** all bags of broken glass, mercury, and cleaning items. Tie the bag tightly.
10. **After cleaning, wash hands, and stay out of the room** where mercury spilled for as long as possible. Keep the window open or a fan running.

LEAD

I have young children. What do I need to know about lead?

Health problems can occur if your child has swallowed small pieces of lead-based paint or has breathed in lead vapors.

How do I know if my child has been affected by lead?

The only way to know your child's lead level is to get a blood test done by your doctor. If a problem is found early, there is a lot that can be done to reduce lead exposure and prevent serious health problems.

Test Your Child for Lead:

- Ask your doctor to test your child's blood for lead.
- Call your doctor for the test results. Ask what your child's blood lead level is. And ask if the test result is normal.
- If the test result is not normal, ask your doctor what to do to lower your child's lead level.
- Also ask when your child should get another blood test.

What else can I do to keep my children safe and healthy?

- Wash your child's hands often, especially after playing, and before eating and sleeping.

- Clean your child's toys often and carefully.
- Feed your child healthy foods that are high in calcium, iron, and vitamin C. Good nutrition helps children's bodies resist lead.

Other Great Earth Day and Environmental Health Sources:

National Resources Defense Council: <http://www.nrdc.org/>

Earth 911: Making Everyday Earth Day <http://earth911.org/>

How To Be A "Green" Kid: http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/home_family/go_green.html

Driving Green: <http://www.drivinggreen.com/>

The Green Guide: <http://www.thegreenguide.com/>

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences' Kids Health Page: <http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/>