

## Dr. L's ECO-LIVING TIPS

Smart ecological decisions are usually the same as smart long-term economic (and health) decisions. It's better to buy a quality product once than a cheap product many times. It's better to spend a little more on quality food... and require fewer health care visits in the future. Many diseases (heart attacks, cancers, asthma, diabetes, etc.) are caused by poor ecological and economic decisions.

Live well. Think long-term. Choose wisely.

1. Energy (electric, gas, coal, etc.)
  - a. Keep thermostats on 68 in the winter and 78 in the summer.
  - b. Plug devices into surge protectors. Turn off the surge protectors when you leave the house or go to bed. Many devices, like TVs and music players, use energy even when turned off.
  - c. Walk/Bike when possible
  - d. Minimize trips – consolidate errands or stop on the way from work or school
  - e. Buy only what you need – energy & resources go into producing every item you purchase.
  - f. When you consider buying a house, remember that large houses require more heat, A/C, furniture, light... everything, in the long-term.
  - g. Got a clothes line? Use it instead of the dryer.
  - h. Take the stairs (not the elevator); Open the door yourself (don't use the handicap button) – unless you really need these devices, of course!
  - i. Use a manual can opener (not electric), push-mower (not riding), rake (not leaf blower), etc.
  - j. Keep your stuff in good working order. Take care of what you have!!
2. Water
  - a. Use less – when purchasing appliances, check their water usage
  - b. Install low flow faucets & shower heads (often, you won't even notice the difference, except in your water bill)
  - c. Install a showerhead turn-off button – if you replace your shower head, consider installing a button to turn off the water flow. You can turn off the water at the showerhead while you lather up, then easily turn it back on (at the right temperature) to rinse off.
  - d. Use a low flow toilet or a brick in the tank
  - e. Use what only what you need (pay attention to running a faucet without actually using the water, like running water while you brush your teeth)
3. Buying Stuff
  - a. Buy events for loved ones, not things (especially things they don't really need)
  - b. Refill, instead of buying new (like hand soap – refill containers use less packaging than buying new pumps). Use a refillable water bottle!!!
  - c. Don't buy it unless you need it (how many pairs of shoes do you actually NEED?)
  - d. Replace items when they're BROKEN
  - e. REALLY want something new? Consider delaying the purchase (e.g. Buying a new phone every 3 years, not every 2 years, means ~12 fewer phones over your life). This also reduces 'impulse' purchases.
  - f. Buy quality items that can be cleaned and reused; Don't buy disposables.
  - g. Buy local when possible (you'll support your local economy AND save energy spent on shipping)
  - h. Use rags to clean, not paper towels (old t-shirts & socks make great rags)

4. Make Your Own
  - a. Grow a garden (even if it's just one tomato or basil plant)
  - b. Learn skills – pottery, woodworking, home repair, knitting. You don't have to do everything yourself, but knowing what goes into a project will help you understand what energy or chemicals are used.
  - c. Make paper decorations – don't buy plastic decorations from far-away countries
  - d. Make your own cleaning products: vinegar, baking soda, ammonia clean just about anything (look online for 'recipes')
  - e. Learn to cook – STOP EATING PROCESSED FOODS. Read the ingredients. Got words you don't understand? Probably shouldn't be eating it.
  - f. Mulch fall leaves and use as landscaping mulch; compost food scraps – no need to buy fertilizer
5. Minimize Plastic
  - a. Use cloth bags for groceries (or toting anything else) – and they're washable
  - b. Reuse glass containers for food storage
  - c. Need a doggie bag? Ask for a piece of foil from the kitchen to wrap your leftovers. AVOID STYROFOAM! Request your favorite restaurants use non-Styrofoam take-out packaging.
  - d. Use wood or metal hangers, not plastic ones
  - e. Buy clothes, rugs, & bedding made of cotton, wool, silk, or hemp/bamboo – not plastic-based fabrics (polyester, acrylic, nylon, rayon, spandex, etc.)
  - f. Use cardboard boxes (reused if possible) with a plastic bag liner, rather than a plastic box. It'll protect your stuff from bugs and humidity with less plastic.
  - g. Need furniture? Buy real wood, not plastic or pressboard. You'll pay more now, but it'll last your lifetime (over the long-term, you'll save money). If you buy refurbished antiques, even better!
  - h. Do you really need that plastic produce bag for the two apples you buy at the grocery store?
6. Minimize Pollutants
  - a. Reduce Phosphates – Use cleaning detergents that are phosphate free (e.g. Seventh Generation Laundry Detergent, Method Dishwasher Detergent)
  - b. DON'T USE AIR FRESHENERS – Plug-in scents or sprays are chemicals that may irritate your lungs. (and attract bugs) Need fresh air? Open the window!
  - c. Use your nose. That "new car smell"? The smell from a new mattress? Those are dangerous chemicals you should avoid.
  - d. Don't spray pesticides or herbicides if you can help it. They're not good for people (and other animals) AND the insects & weeds just evolve resistance so the sprays become useless.
  - e. Recycle & Donate – everything you can
  - f. Get rid of the make-up, nail polish, hair goo, perfume/cologne, etc. (research their chemicals)
  - g. VOTE to get ingredients listed on chemical products
7. Plants
  - a. Grow wildflowers instead of grass, plant native trees – let them help us!
  - b. Eat more plants, less meat. You don't have to be vegetarian, just try a meat-less day or meal.

Overwhelmed? Just try one tip at a time.

No one is perfect, but you can strive to improve your choices every day.