

## **WHAT IS ECO-FRIENDLY, OR "GREEN" CLEANING?**

In recent years, terms like "*going green*" and "*eco-friendly*" have become buzz words on talk shows, commercials and product packaging. The term "eco-friendly" has been used for so many different products and practices, its meaning is in danger of being lost. By understanding the true meaning of eco-friendly, you can implement the practices that will lead to healthier living for the planet and its inhabitants, big and small.

### **DEFINITION**

Eco-friendly literally means earth-friendly or not harmful to the environment (see References 1). This term most commonly refers to products that contribute to green living or practices that help conserve resources like water and energy. Eco-friendly products also prevent contributions to air, water and land pollution. You can engage in eco-friendly habits or practices by being more conscious of how you use resources.

### **Product Qualifications**

Making a truly eco-friendly product keeps both environmental and human safety in mind. At a minimum, the product is non-toxic. Other eco-friendly attributes include the use of sustainably grown or raised ingredients, produced in ways that do not deplete the ecosystem. Organic ingredients or materials are grown without toxic pesticides or herbicides. Products with "made from recycled materials" contain glass, wood, metal or plastic reclaimed from waste products and made into something new. Biodegradable products break down through natural decomposition, which is less taxing on landfills and the ecosystem as a whole. (See References 3)

### **Practice Examples**

You can develop eco-friendly habits to help you use less and make the most of what you have. Turn off lights in empty rooms and use a programmable thermostat so you're only heating or cooling your home when it's occupied (see References 2). Businesses can also institute such practices, in addition to bigger initiatives, such as company-wide recycling programs to conserve natural resources and telecommuting for employees, which decreases air pollution and fuel consumption by eliminating daily travel to work.

### **Greenwashing**

Companies sometimes label their products "eco-friendly" or "environmentally friendly" without them truly being so. Called "greenwashing," marketing campaigns perpetuate this practice, aimed at helping companies increase their product sales by appealing to ecologically conscious buyers. To avoid purchasing "greenwashed" products, look for products approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Energy Star program or an ecologically conscious consumer-advocacy group such as the Green Good Housekeeping Seal.

## **7 BENEFITS OF ECO-FRIENDLY, OR “GREEN” CLEANING**

As lives become busier, over-scheduled and more stressful, it's easy to gravitate towards the latest products that promise to make annoying chores even easier. Need a bathroom cleaner? On your next trip to the store, you grab one of the many bright and colorful bottles promising to be a quick fix. But did you ever think about what's in that container?

Whether you're a housekeeper who cleans with these products all day or someone who cleans your own home regularly, you should take the time to consider it.

Most are made up of harsh cocktails of chemicals, which can be bad for your health -- and your kids' health. As people rethink what they're bringing into their homes, they're looking for greener solutions.

Two experts [Leslie Reichert](#), author of "[Joy of Green Cleaning](#)," and [Sara Snow](#), author of "[Sara Snow's Fresh Living](#)," share 7 reasons why people should make the switch to green cleaning products.

### **1. Healthier Home**

If you go green, "No longer will there be chemicals absorbed into the skin or breathed in by the person cleaning," Reichert says. Health benefits extend to family members who are no longer breathing in cleaners lingering in the air and sitting on surfaces.

Studies have shown that using a household cleaning spray, even as little as once a week, raises the risk of developing asthma. Snow says that using green cleaning products can reduce the chances of developing asthma, which "today is the most common chronic illness and the leading cause of school absences due to chronic illness across the country."

### **2. Purer Environment**

When you use many cleaning products, "harmful chemicals are being released into the environment," says Reichert. Not great for you and the people around you to breathe in.

Changing to greener methods, "helps reduce pollution to our waterways and the air and it minimizes your impact on ozone depletion and global climate change with fewer smog-producing chemicals," advises Snow. Many green products also use recyclable packaging which minimizes waste.

### **3. Safer Products**

Conventional cleaning products pose risks such as chemical burns to the cleaner's skin and eyes. Green cleaners aren't corrosive and meet strict standards regarding inhalation toxicity, combustibility and skin absorption.

### **4. Better Air Quality**

As with most people, Snow can't stand the "stench of strong chemical odors." Many green cleaning products -- including store bought and ones you can make at home -- include pleasant natural essential oils. Reichert even refers to cleaning with these products as her "aromatherapy."

### **5. Less Expensive**

"For home cleaning, vinegar, olive oil, lemon juice, etc. can do the trick for pennies on the dollar, compared to buying conventional cleaning products," Snow says. Why go out and buy products when you can use things you already have in your pantry?

Investing in green products also makes sense for companies. "The cost of environmentally friendly cleaning products has become much more competitive, while cleaning in an environmentally sound way reduces the risk of sick days for employees and the risk of fires and chemical spills," mentions Snow.

### **6. Fewer Antibacterials**

Do you really need to look for products that say "antibacterial"? "We're now told by the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) (FDA) that washing with antibacterial soaps isn't any better than regular soaps, and the [American Medical Association](#) (AMA) says that the frequent use of antibacterial ingredients can promote bacterial resistance to antibiotics," Snow says. "[Triclosan](#), a common antibacterial agent found in many soaps, [may] mess with your hormonal system and thyroid. Most green or environmentally friendly cleaning products don't contain antibacterial agents."

### **7. More Knowledge of Ingredients**

Government regulations don't require ingredients to be listed on any cleaning products. This is another reason Reichert is a strong advocate for making your own products at home, so "you know exactly what the ingredients are in your cleaning recipes."

As concerns for health become more prevalent and people become more aware of the harsh effects cleaning chemicals are having, they're going back to basics and looking for greener ways to clean. To hear our experts tell it, the benefits speak for themselves.

## **Top 10 Eco-Friendly Ways to Clean the House**

Read more: <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/clean-house-top-10-eco-friendly-ways.html#ixzz470rTxKhX> By the Care2 staff.

Choosing environmentally friendly cleaning products — and removing toxic ones — goes a long way towards ensuring a home with fresh, clean air. Clean air renews and rejuvenates; it doesn't pollute our lives or the environment. Living in a less toxic home, removed from neurotoxic chemicals, improves sleep and concentration, makes babies less fussy, and gives a sense of well-being. Your household's toxic burden on the environment will be significantly reduced by following these steps, and this too can bring peace of mind.

### **1. LOOK UNDER YOUR KITCHEN SINK: Remove toxic products**

**WHY:** Almost everyone in the world has a cupboard full of poisons under their kitchen sink. Wasp spray, oven cleaner, waxes and polishes—the place is full of chemicals that display the words poison, danger, warning, or caution. Small amounts of the poisons drift from, and leak out of bottles and spray bottles, which then waft around the kitchen. Household poisonings are one of the highest threats to the health of children.

**HOW:** Place products with signal words in a locked cupboard in storage for your community's next Household Hazardous Pickup Day (see next tip); replace all hazardous products with safer versions in the future.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** No chemicals wafting into your household; safer environment for kids.

### **2. ABOUT HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE PICKUPS: Take toxic products**

**WHY:** Hazardous materials shouldn't be poured down the drain or thrown away in the trash as they can cause serious pollution problems in the waste stream.

**HOW:** Call your local recycling center, town or city hall. Most communities have at least one Household Hazardous Waste Pickup Day a year.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** There will be fewer toxic materials leaching out of landfills, burning in incinerators, and being washed into the waste water stream.

### **3. REPLACE TOXIC PRODUCTS: Choose non-toxic, biodegradable substitutes**

**WHY:** Help reduce the toxic burden of manufacturing, your home, and the waste stream.

**HOW:** Read "Signal Words" on labels. The signal words poison, danger, warning, or caution, found on the label of products such as pesticides and cleaning products, are placed there by order of the federal government and are primarily for your protection. In some cases these signal words are on the label because of the potential impact the product can have on the environment. Poison/danger denotes a product of most concern, one that is highly toxic, and ingesting small amounts—in some cases a few drops—can be fatal. Warning means moderately toxic, as little as a teaspoonful can be fatal; and caution denotes a product that is less toxic, one in which it would be necessary to ingest between two tablespoons and two cups to be fatal. Corrosive products can damage skin and mucous membranes, and a strong sensitizer is a chemical that can increase allergies.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Labels provide information by which you can protect yourself, your family, and the environment.

### **4. LEARN NON-TOXIC CLEANING BASICS: How to use kitchen cupboard ingredients**

**WHY:** Save money, protect your health, reduce your use of valuable resources of the earth, avoid petroleum products and other non-renewable resources.

**HOW:** Learning to clean from scratch—making homemade recipes—can truly work if you take time to understand a bit about the chemistry behind how the materials work. Here are the five ingredients that Annie (the author of Clean & Green among other books, and Care2's Healthy Living channel producer) finds to be the safest, most effective, and useful for cleaning.

[The Five Basics for Non-Toxic Cleaning](#)

Make sure to keep all homemade formulas well-labeled, and out of the reach of children.

Note how to safely [reduce four airborne allergens in the home with these simple steps](#).

**HIGHLIGHTS:** Establish a safe, cheap and simple lifestyle.

**MORE:** Visit Care2.com's Healthy Home category for many non-toxic cleaning tips. Just scroll down to [Non-Toxic Cleaning](#).

## **5. OF MOPS, SPONGES, RAGS, AND OTHER ACCESSORIES: Natural, reusable**

WHY: Reduce your use of non-renewable resources; avoid products with potentially harmful ingredients such as sponges with antibacterial ingredients; reuse old shirts as rags and more. Use cloth rags instead of paper towels to save trees. Save money!

HOW: Look at your purchase of mops, paper towels, sponges, buckets, vacuums, and more with an eye towards their durability, health and environmental impact. If you must use paper towels buy recycled, unbleached paper.

HIGHLIGHTS: Reusable mops, rags instead of paper, safe sponges, HEPA vacuums all work towards providing your home and environment with fresh, clean air, and reduce your consumption of nonrenewable resources.

## **6. LEARN ABOUT YOUR WATER: Is it hard or soft?**

WHY: With hard water you will most likely need to clean with a detergent instead of a soap to avoid soap scum.

HOW: Read here about [when and why to choose a detergent or a soap](#)

HIGHLIGHTS: Choosing the right product for the right job reduces time and resources.

## **7. DISINFECTANTS? CHLORINE BLEACH? Look for alternatives**

WHY: Just as antibiotics are causing drug resistance, so too are disinfectants. Chlorine bleach can cause cancer causing chemicals to form in the waste water stream. [Here is more information about chlorine and the home.](#)

HOW: [Make a safer antibacterial spray](#) by using these suggestions. Read here about [toxic sponges](#). Visit your natural food store and ask for their recommended chlorine beach alternative. Seventh Generation and other brands offer alternatives that work.

HIGHLIGHTS: A healthier home and healthier environment.

## **8. CONSERVE WATER**

WHY: Clean water is one of our most precious and diminishing resources and we don't want to waste it.

HOW: Don't run the water unless you are using it or catching it in a bucket for use; sweep instead of wet mop when possible; put a tracking matt at the door to collect mud and dust so you will need to wash the floor less; etc. Use common sense.

HIGHLIGHTS: Do your part to preserve the earth's precious resources.

## **9. CLEAN INDOOR AIR WITH PLANTS**

WHY: Plants have been found to reduce indoor air pollution!

HOW: Here are the [top 10 plants that clear indoor air.](#)

HIGHLIGHTS: Plants clean the air and provide more oxygen too!

## **10. USE YOUR SENSES: Smell, feel, hear**

WHY: If you use your nose you will know when food is rotten, when dog beds need to be cleaned, when toxic chemicals may be leaking from old product bottles, and more. If you use your sense of touch you will know when doorknobs are sticky, the floor needs washing, etc. If you allow your senses to be your guide you will stay on top of cleaning jobs that need to be attended to.

Read more: <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/clean-house-top-10-eco-friendly-ways.html#ixzz470rDsZ65>

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