



your health & well-being

Five great things you can do for the environment, for yourself, and for your family
It IS easy, being green (with thanks to Kermit)

1. Be a "locavore" – buy local

Buying local means buying foods (or any goods or services) that are produced, grown, or raised as close to your home as possible. Fresher foods mean a greener kitchen and a healthier body. Look for locally sourced produce at your grocery store, and shop at local farm stands and farmers' markets.

The fewer miles your food has to travel, the better. The quality is less likely to suffer during transportation, and less energy will be used to get it to your store. In the U.S., the average grocery store's produce travels nearly 1,500 miles between the farm where it was grown and your refrigerator.

- Fresh food from local farms is healthier than industrially farmed products because it doesn't spend days in trucks and on store shelves losing nutrients.
- Local foods from small farms usually undergo minimal processing, are produced in relatively small quantities, and are distributed within a few dozen miles of where they originate.
- Food processors use a large amount of paper and plastic packaging to keep food looking fresh for as long as possible.

2. Grow your own

Gardening is great exercise and fun for all the family. Even better, you know exactly what went into growing your produce and how it has been handled. And you won't have to drive to the store for a couple of tomatoes or a head of lettuce!

If your town provides community garden plots, that is a great way to grow a bigger volume of your own produce. But you don't need acres of space. With access to a deck or balcony, a roof, or a patch of ground no larger than a flower bed, you can get started. You can grow tomatoes or baby lettuce in pots on your balcony – just give them enough sunlight and keep them watered. Check your library or online for more on how to get started.

3. Use natural cleaners

Some common household items can be effective household cleaners (but first test on an inconspicuous area). They are also inexpensive, chemical-free, and easy to find.

- Baking soda – cleans, deodorizes, softens water, and scours.
- White vinegar – cuts grease and removes mildew, odors, some stains and wax buildup. Never use vinegar on marble surfaces. Don't worry about your home smelling like vinegar. The smell disappears when it dries.
- Lemon juice – one of the strongest food acids, it is effective against most household bacteria.

4. Drink tap water rather than bottled

- It's safer. Tap water has stricter standards and is more closely monitored than bottled water. Under the Safe Drinking Water Act, local water suppliers are required to test tap water daily and to report the quality of the water annually. In many cases, it also tastes better! If yours doesn't, run your tap water through a filter system.
- It saves you money and means less plastic in your trash. Did you know that 60 million bottles a day go into U.S. landfills, where they can take up to 1,000 years to biodegrade? Producing those bottles consumes 1.5 million barrels of crude oil annually – enough to keep 100,000 cars running for a year. Using a filter for your tap water would cost about three cents a bottle versus \$1.25 or so for bottled water.
- It is a tooth saver, because it contains more fluoride than bottled water – and that helps prevent tooth decay.

5. Choose compact fluorescent light bulbs

Replace old-fashioned incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), which use 75 percent less energy and last 10 times longer. A typical 75-watt incandescent bulb can be replaced by a 20-watt CFL.

Some simple precautions when using CFLs:

- Don't use them in closed fixtures.
- If you use dimmers, check that your CFL is safe to use with them.
- Check the packages for safety warnings and compatibility with different fixtures.
- At the end of their operating lives, CFLs should be disposed of properly as they contain mercury.





may tip of the month

Make healthy snacks

Buy your favorite nuts and dried fruits from the bulk bins at your grocery store or natural foods shop, and make your own snack mix. You'll know what you have is fresh, with only the items you enjoy. It's usually cheaper, too.

Get some fresh air

Just 20 minutes in the open air can boost your energy for the whole day. It's good for your mood and helps to relieve stress, depression and anxiety. Instead of lunch at your desk, put on your sneakers and head out for a walk. You'll feel better for it!

Wash your hands

The single most important step you can take to stay healthy is simply to wash your hands. It's natural protection against colds and flu, and all the contagious bugs that live in our world.

One last thing: Don't just think about making the switch to living greener; actually do it. Today. It'll do you good. And it will do the world good.

On myCIGNA.com this month

One very valuable resource that needs conserving: your money! When it comes to your own spending on health care for you and your family, go to myCIGNA.com, click the myHealth tab, and check the **Cost and Quality Resources**. You'll find information that will help you get the best value for your money.



Most Americans live about 60 miles from an apple orchard, but the apples you typically buy at the grocery store travel 1,726 miles between the orchard and your house. That's further than driving from Portland, Maine to Miami, Florida!

Source: Pirog, Rich, and Andrew Benjamin. "Checking the Food Odometer: Comparing Food Miles for Local Versus Conventional Produce Sales in Iowa Institutions." Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, July 2003.



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