

Healthy Indoor Environments

Where We Live, Learn and Play

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Living Even Greener

Written by Pamela R. Turner, Professor and Extension Housing & Indoor Environment Specialist

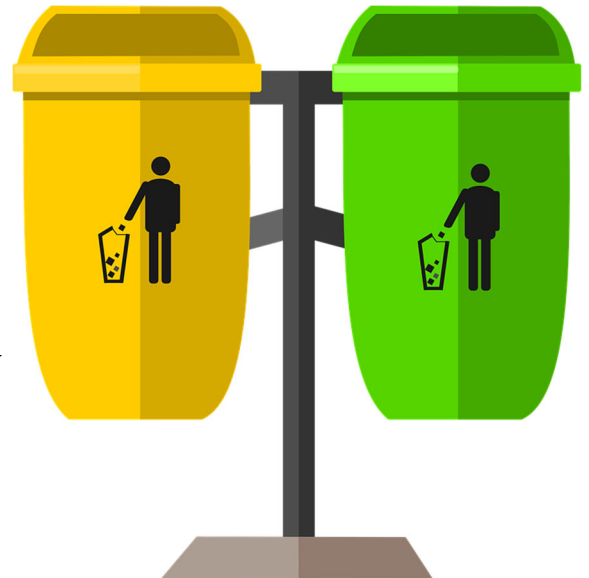


You may have already made several changes to help the environment, like taking reusable bags to the store and replacing all your light bulbs with Energy Star qualified lighting. That's great! We can all do a little more to conserve natural resources, reduce waste, and perhaps save money.

Inside this issue:

- Living Even Greener
- Energy Saving Tips for Homeowners and Renters
- Safe Outdoor Play for Young Children in Cold Weather
- Helpful Hints for Healthy Homes
- Home Safety Tips
- Healthy Home Hacks

- **Downsize.** Give away things you no longer use. Donate to a local non-profit or check social media to see if there are local sites for passing along items, such as Buy Nothing.
- **Recycle right.** Many of us recycle, but we sometimes contaminate our recycling with items that should not be recycled. Contact your local recycling company and learn more about what to put in the bin and what to leave out. *When in doubt, throw it out!*
- **Compost.** Start a compost pile for food scraps, grass, yard clippings, and dead plants. You will reduce your garbage and improve your garden soil.
- **Sweep.** Instead of hosing off driveways and sidewalks, use a broom to sweep them.
- **Repair.** Watch “how to” videos online and use your newly acquired knowledge to repair small electronics, bicycles, and exercise equipment.
- **Mend.** Take a class or watch a video and learn how to sew on a button, mend a tear and darn your socks. Instead of tossing, repair.
- **Buy Quality.** When buying new clothing, select quality items rather than inexpensive fashion items. Purchase trendy items from thrift stores, and invest in a few quality items that will last through fashion trends.
- **Stop Using Cling Wrap.** Switch to more environmentally friendly options like reusable containers, foil, or beeswax.
- **Invest Responsibly.** Select socially responsible investments for your retirement and investment accounts.



(Image Source: Pixabay)

Energy Saving Tips for Homeowners and Renters

Written by Jackie E. Ogden, CFCS – FACS Agent, Chatham County

Cost-effective energy tips can help save energy dollars and reduce your carbon footprint. Everyone should try to reduce their daily energy use. As a renter you should inspect the housing unit before signing the lease. Ask the utility company to provide the annual energy usage of that property prior to signing the lease. Below are some tips to help you reduce your energy bill.

Check Your Refrigerator and Water Heater

Home appliances account for about 13% of the average home's energy use. Your refrigerator is a major energy consumer. Make sure it operates more efficiently by not overpacking your refrigerator and making sure the gasket around the doors is sealing tightly. An easy way to check the gasket is to place a one-dollar bill between the seal and the door. If you can easily pull the dollar out when the door is closed, then your seal is not working properly.

The water heater is also a major energy user. To increase its efficiency, insulate the unit and pipes, however, do not cover the thermostat or burner compartment. If your water heater is 10-15 + years old or produces a popping sound when operating, this is the sign that there may be sediment build-up in the water heater tank that will impact the equipment's efficiency. Compare new options for water heating equipment including tankless water heaters.

Other Tips for Saving Energy at Home

- Have your heating and cooling systems inspected and serviced by a professional at least once a year
- Inspect and clean or change air filters every 3 months
- Change all lighting to ENERGY STAR certified light bulbs
- Reduce drafts by adding weather stripping around doors and windows, installing storm windows, and sealing ductwork
- Check the insulation and add more if needed, especially in the attic, exterior walls, and crawl space. Learn more about where to add insulation in your home on [Department of Energy website](#).
- Make sure appliances are working properly. Keep a log to track when equipment has been serviced and warranty dates for each appliance.
- Learn to read clothing and laundry soap labels. You will find that a lot of your clothes will come clean in cold water. They will last longer if you don't over-dry them.
- If you are replacing appliances, buy ENERGY STAR certified products
- Lower the thermostat to 68 degrees during the day and 60 degrees at night. Add more layers of clothing during the cold winter months.
- During the winter, open the curtains to let the sunshine in and close them at night to keep the heat in

Some utility companies will do a free audit of your home to determine energy use. They may offer incentives to implement energy conservation practices that will provide financial savings.



(Image Source: Pixabay)

Safe Outdoor Play for Young Children in Cold Weather

Written by Diane W. Bales, Professor and Extension Human Development Specialist

When the weather gets cold, many parents and ECE teachers wonder whether it's safe for children to play outside. Young children's bodies do not regulate temperature as well as adults' bodies do, so children can become chilled easily. Before you go outside, check the temperature and wind speed. If the temperature is below 30 degrees Fahrenheit and the wind speed is above 10 mph, it may be safer to play indoors.

If you do venture outside during cold weather, here are some tips to keep children warm.

- Dress children in layers. Pay special attention to covering hands, feet, and head – these areas are most easily affected by frostbite
- If you're playing in snow, be sure outer layers (including coat, pants, boots, and gloves) are waterproof
- Wrap a scarf around the child's neck before putting on the coat for extra warmth
- Be sure children are wearing sunscreen on their faces, even in cold weather
- Limit outdoor time, and go back inside when children show any signs of feeling cold – including red cheeks, shivering, or chattering teeth



(Image Source: Pixabay)

Helpful Hints for Healthy Homes

January is National Radon Action Month

Take action and test your home for radon gas. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, resulting in the deaths of around 21,000 people each year. About 2,900 of these deaths occur among people who have never smoked. Radon is often referred to as the silent killer. You can't see, smell, or taste it. But exposure to radon is a preventable health risk. The only way to know if the radon in your home is high is to test. A short-term test is easy and inexpensive. Residents of Georgia can order a radon test kit from UGA Extension at radon.uga.edu.

Check for Air Leaks

Do the incense test to check where the leaks are in your home. On a windy day, light an incense stick and hold it upright near the closed windows and doors in your home. If the smoke travels horizontally or parallel with the floor an air leak exists. When you find a leak, seal it with latex-based caulk or weather-stripping that can be purchased from a local hardware store. Sealing can reduce heat losses by up to 30 percent.



(Image Source: Pixabay)

Home Safety Tips

Written by Pamela R. Turner, Professor and Extension Housing & Indoor Environment Specialist

During the winter, we spend more time indoors and may accumulate stuff inside our homes, leading to more trips and falls. There are simple things you can do to reduce the risk of falling.

- Run extension cords along the wall and not under rugs or across high traffic areas
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and shower
- Install extra lighting on stairs inside your home and along outdoor pathways
- Add nightlights in hallways and bathrooms
- Keep flashlights near sleeping areas
- Secure handrails



(Image Source: Pixabay)

Make time to do a complete assessment of your home. Use the UGA Extension [Home Safety Checklist](#) for general safety tips and the checklist for [Childproofing Your Home](#).

Healthy Home Hacks

~ Pamela Turner, UGA Extension Housing and Indoor Environment Specialist

~ Diane Bales, UGA Extension Human Development Specialist

Stainless steel appliances can be cleaned with a solution of warm water and a few drops of mild dish soap.

Clean the inside of the microwave with a microwave-safe dish filled with water and dish soap. Turn the microwave on for 1 minute then wipe with a wet sponge. Add a lemon half to the water to add a fresh scent.

Use shaving cream to remove water stains from shower doors. Allow the shaving cream to sit for 15 minutes, then wipe off.

Repurpose used dryer sheets to buff water spots from mirrors, remove the ring inside the toilet, or wipe baseboards clean.



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