



PERSONAL PRACTICES TO SAVE ECOSYSTEMS

Reducing Toxic Chemicals and Air Pollutants

PURCHASING PRACTICES

- 1. New products.** Purchase as few new products as possible since industry is the largest contributor of toxics in the environment: (a) for holidays and birthdays give services, tickets to events, or home-made gifts; (b) buy used goods at thrift stores; (c) share (or rent) tools and equipment with neighbors; (d) resist the temptation to purchase each new technology; and (e) since advertising creates demand, establish limits on children's TV time.
- 2. Building materials.** To prevent persistent toxics, avoid any building materials made of vinyl, such as window frames, floors, siding, wallpaper, and piping. Watch for vinyl in consumer products as well: squeeze and inflatable toys, hoses, shower curtains, upholstery, shoes, and purses.
- 3. Electronic equipment and batteries.** Minimize purchases of electronic equipment and battery-operated goods, which are likely to contain lead, mercury, cadmium, and other heavy metals. Assure that batteries and electronic equipment get recycled at the end of their lives.
- 4. Household goods.** Avoid synthetic materials in carpets, furniture cushions, mattresses, other home furnishings, clothing, and coated cooking pans.
- 5. Plastic packaging and disposables.** Avoid plastic products, such as Styrofoam cups, food packaging, water bottles, bags, and film: (1) keep a washable mug for coffee; (2) purchase food in bulk taking your own bags; (3) prefer stores where items are not prewrapped, such as those that have meat counters; (4) drink water from the tap and refill a reusable bottle; and (5) store food in reusable containers.
- 6. Travel and yard equipment.** Purchase a gasoline- or alternative-fueled car other than diesel (even 20 percent biodiesel is much dirtier than gas). Use a push lawn mower. (The EPA estimates that using a power mower for an hour produces the same emissions as driving a car 50 miles.)
- 7. Cleaning products.** For household cleaning, use basic baking soda, vinegar, and soap solutions rather than chemical formulations. See www.nwei.org/files/EcoCleaners.pdf.
- 8. Pesticides.** Purchase organic food and organic cotton apparel. Eliminate weed and feed, slug bait, and other pesticides. Practice natural pest-control methods for fleas, ants, and other insects. Limit purchases of nursery plants unless you know the nursery uses organic practices. See www.watoxics.org/publications.

TRANSPORTATION AND HOME

- 9.** To reduce air emissions from fossil fuels, take the actions on p. 40, "Reducing Greenhouse and Ozone-Depleting Gases."

INVESTMENT

- 10.** Invest in companies that are leaders in sustainable practices. See www.portfolio21.com or www.socialinvest.org.