

Making Your Family More Eco-Conscious

By Sarah Welch and Alicia Rockmore



Global warming: you can't go anywhere nowadays without hearing about its massive effect on our planet and our lives. Temperatures are rising. Glaciers are melting. And it's only getting worse. While the statistics are overwhelming, and the forecast is usually ominous, there are a wide variety of things we, as individuals and families, can do to become more environmentally friendly. Unfortunately, the number of helpful hints can start to be just as overwhelming as the problem we're trying to solve, leading to an inertia that, truthfully, we can't afford to fall into. Don't worry, though. By following a few simple steps, it's easier than you think to get your family environmentally Buttoned Up.

Alicia on "Focus On A Few"

"When starting to make your family more eco-conscious, it's best to focus on the one or two changes you can make that will have the biggest impact. It's truly amazing how the smallest changes can effect the big picture. Start turning lights out in rooms you aren't using. Start using fluorescent bulbs in your light fixtures. Or simply plant a tree. (A single tree will absorb one ton of carbon dioxide over its lifetime. Shade provided by trees can also reduce your air conditioning bill by 10 to 15%)."

Sarah on "Starting Simple"

"The world can't afford to wait until individuals find the perfect solution to our energy hogging habits. The important thing is that you start to do something, anything, to make your imprint on the environment as small as possible. The "perfect" place to start is to find changes that you can easily integrate into your daily life. The more readily they fit into your existing routine, the more likely you are to stick to them over time. Some changes fit easier into the daily rhythm of family life (everyone can recycle, or use the dishwasher less), while some are better suited for those who have more time, resources, and space (for those in big, busy cities, clotheslines may not be a realistic option to dryers). Don't worry if you're not perfectly green, just look for ways to be more green than you are today."

10 tips to going green without going nuts.

- 1. Bring your own cloth bags to the grocery store.** Not only do you get to keep plastic bags out of landfills (These bags that take up to 1,000 years to biodegrade), now stores like Whole Foods give you a ten cent discount per bag you bring in.
- 2. Unplug the electronics.** Even when turned off, things like hairdryers, cell phone chargers and televisions use energy. In fact, the energy used to keep display clocks lit and memory chips working accounts for 5 percent of total domestic energy consumption.
- 3. Check your tires.** Proper inflation can improve gas mileage by more than 3% and thus reduce carbon emissions.
- 4. Use fluorescent bulbs.** Fluorescents use 60% less energy than a regular bulb. If every household replaced just three 60-watt incandescent light bulbs with fluorescents, we would reduce as much pollution as if we took 3.5 million cars off the roads.
- 5. Stop using plastic water bottles.** Americans use 3.3 million



plastic water bottles every hour but recycle only one in five. At work and at home, use sippy cups, or reusable bottles.

- 6. Bring your own coffee cup.** At Starbucks, anything that is not a paper cup (your own cup, thermos, whatever) will get you \$0.10 off the cup of coffee.
- 7. Adjust the temperature.** Move your thermostat down 2° in winter and up 2° in summer. Almost half of the energy we use in our homes goes to heating and cooling.
- 8. "Warm" wash.** It takes a lot of energy to heat water. Start washing your clothes in cold or warm water instead of hot.
- 9. Install a low flow showerhead.** Another way to reduce hot water usage. You can use less hot water by installing a low flow showerhead.
- 10. Seek out and support local farmers markets.** Not only is the food fresher, farmers markets reduce the amount of energy required to grow and transport the food to you by one fifth.

We are the co-founders of Buttoned Up, inc., a company dedicated to helping stretched and stressed women get themselves organized (along with everybody else they're responsible for too!). We welcome your thoughts! Please send ideas and questions to us at: yourlife@getbuttonedup.com or visit us at www.getbuttonedup.com