

green talk



Creating a Clean and Green Home

Chemicals are part of our lives. We treat illnesses, paint our houses, and even clothe ourselves with products that have been developed through chemical research. However, there are reasons to be cautious about our exposure to some chemicals.

Why reduce toxics?

We spend nearly 90 percent of our time indoors. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (<https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq>) indoor pollutants may be two to five times higher than outdoor levels. And only a fraction of the more than 75,000 registered chemicals have gone through complete testing for human health concerns. Children are especially susceptible to the negative effects of chemicals, warns the EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection (<https://www.epa.gov/children>). Pound for pound, children breathe more air, drink more water, and eat more food, and when they play, they crawl and put things in their mouths. As a result, children have an increased chance of exposure to potential pollutants, and because children's bodies are still developing, they may process these pollutants differently from adults.

What you can do?

Simple changes in our everyday routines can reduce our long-term exposures to low levels of potentially harmful substances — changes in how we choose the products we buy, or the ways we clean our houses and take care of the yard. These changes will not only make our homes safer, they may also save us money.

Inside your home

Reducing toxics inside your house can be as simple as looking for a few key words on products when you buy cleaning products. The words caution, warning, danger, or poison indicate that the product's ingredients are harmful. Choose the least hazardous product to do the job. If you have hazardous products at home, be sure to dispose of them properly.

Before you use a product, carefully read the directions and follow the instructions. Be sure to use the correct amount of a product. Remember, you won't get twice the results by using twice as much. Select products made from plant-based

materials, such as oils made from citrus, seed, vegetable or pine. The U.S. EPA's Design for the Environment program (<https://www.epa.gov/saferchoice>) can help you identify cleaning and other products that perform well, are cost-effective, and are safer for the environment. Look for products with the DfE label and protect your family's health and the planet.

Keeping your house clean

Remove your shoes when you enter your house. Your shoes can track in harmful amounts of pesticides, lead, cadmium and other chemicals. Keeping a floor mat at your doors for people to wipe their feet on when they enter will also help. Vacuum carpets and floors regularly. Children playing on your carpet may actually be more exposed to pesticides lodged in the carpet than from the outside, because pesticides break down less readily indoors than outdoors in the sunlight. Use a fine particulate filter, such as a HEPA filter, in your vacuum cleaner, if possible. Otherwise, the dust vacuumed up is redistributed into the air where it can be inhaled. Single-ingredient, common household materials such as baking soda, vinegar, or plant-based soaps and detergents can often do the

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Shredding Event at the Environmental Center

**Wednesday, Nov. 6
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

Bring your personal and confidential papers to the Environmental Center. Documents will be shredded on-site by Shred Right and recycled. CDs, floppy disks, and other media will be accepted for off-site destruction.

Limit: 6 boxes weighing no more than 30 lbs. each. **This event is free and open to residents and businesses.**

WOODBURY:

**Environmental Center
4039 Cottage Grove Dr.**

For more information, visit

<https://www.co.washington.mn.us/604/Environmental-Center>.



A BIG Thank You for Extra Efforts in Recycling!

The City would like to send a special thank you to the **Wallgren Family on Old Wildwood Road** and the **Sigfold Family on Oak Street** for their extra efforts in recycling. Keep up the good work! For their extra effort, these families may stop in at City Hall and pick up a free Reduce, Reuse, Recycle water bottle. Each quarter we will pick two families to acknowledge.

ATTENTION MAHTOMEDI UTILITY CUSTOMERS

FREE Payment and Billing Services

To view or pay utility bills, go to www.ci.mahtomedi.mn.us or call 877-885-7968. Pay now, schedule a payment or set up Auto-Pay. An email will be sent to you when your bill is ready. You may pay by credit card (MasterCard, Visa or Discover) or eCheck (payment from your checking or savings account). Please opt out of paper bills to help save money and be GREEN.

Creating a Clean and Green Home, *continued*

job on your carpet or other surfaces. If your carpet needs professional cleaning, enlist a carpet service that uses less-toxic cleaners that are low in VOCs and irritants.

Doing laundry

Instead of more complicated detergents, try using a combination of washing soda and borax in your machine. These are usually as effective as more complex formulas and are also usually cheaper. Don't rely on dryer sheets for freshening your laundry. Clotheslines are a great way to keep clothes, sheets, and towels smelling clean. In the winter, fluff the clothes in the dryer, and then hang to dry indoors. You get the added benefit of increased humidity. Avoid bleach when possible. If whitening is needed, use non-chlorine bleach, which is oxygen based and often highly effective. Buy clothes that don't need dry cleaning or use an alternative called "wet cleaning." Clothes that have been dry cleaned emit perchlorethylene, a chemical that can cause cancer. The wet cleaning process uses water so there are no harmful gases emitted from the cleaned clothing.

Bath, beauty, and hygiene products

Avoid using antibacterial soaps. Triclosan, a common antibacterial agent used in soaps and cleaning products, is believed to contribute to antibiotic resistance, and causes other health and environmental problems. Which is best: Antibacterial or plain soap? Visit the Minnesota Department of Health at <https://www.health.state.mn.us/> to learn what health professionals are saying. Use eye drops, contact lens solutions, and nasal sprays and drops that are free of thimerosal or other mercury-containing preservatives. Look for unscented and natural dyes in products to avoid potential allergic reactions.

In your yard and garden

Caring for all the green and growing things in your yard can have a big effect on how much waste your household creates. From grass clippings and leaves to pesticides and water, the eco-impact of your lawn and garden can be significant. Learn more, visit the MPCA's yard and garden webpages at <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/living-green/yard-and-garden>.

Yard Waste and Organics Sign-up

As part of the new five-year recycling contract with Waste Management, the City is offering residents the opportunity to opt-in and sign up for curbside weekly yard waste and organics collection.

Food products, plant materials, compostable service ware and soiled paper goods will all be accepted. Paper products commonly placed in the trash, including coffee filters, tea bags, tissues, paper towels, napkins and take-out containers, can be recycled. Yard waste material like leaves, grass clippings, brush, twigs and small branches can also be placed in the same bin for composting.

Residents will receive a separate bin to recycle these materials and can choose between 32, 64, and 96 gallon bins. The cost to participate is \$13.75 per month and will be charged on the quarterly utility bill. **The City must have a minimum of 100 residents sign-up in order for the collection service to begin.**

Sign up by visiting www.ci.mahtomedi.mn.us, completing the form and submitting to the city in person or through email. This is an excellent opportunity for residents to easily reduce their household waste footprint and compost yard waste items without having to travel to a compost site. Questions can be directed to Mahtomedi City Hall at 651-426-3344.

