



“I know the environment can affect my health. What can I do to keep my environment healthy?”



We interact with both our natural and our built environments constantly. Maintaining a healthy earth is important to improving our quality of life and the years of healthy life we have for ourselves, our families and our future generations.

What is our environment and how does it affect health?

The environment is everything that makes up our surroundings and affects our ability to live on the earth. It includes the air we breathe, the water that covers the earth's surface, the plants and animals around us, and much more.

Some of physical, biological and chemical factors can have a negative impact on our environment and can affect our health. These can include:

- *Changes in our weather patterns.* These changes can have an impact on clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food supply and secure shelter.
- *Poor air quality.* The poorer the quality of the air we breathe the greater the risk of long-term damage to a person's respiratory and cardiovascular systems, and the high risk of certain cancers.
- *Toxic substances and waste.* Anything we throw away, get rid of, or don't use and how we choose to handle it affects our environment.
- *Polluted water sources.* Both drinking water and water for recreation can be contaminated by infectious agents or chemicals which can cause mild to severe illness.
- *Chemicals found in homes and communities.* These can include lead-based paints, structural problems, inadequate sanitation, indoor air pollution, and cause electrical and fire hazards.

Small changes have a positive impact on environment

- Bring a bag to the grocery store or for other shopping activities.
- Buy a reusable water bottle and bring a reusable cup or mug to coffee shops.
- Pay attention to single use items and try to reduce or not use them. For example, try not to use plastic cutlery or disposable straws but bring your own instead.

- Shop in bulk. Think about the amount of packaging used when purchasing items in larger containers versus smaller ones. If you have the option, consider package-free, recycled or compostable packaging.
- Make sure your waste goes to the right place. Do your best to sort your recyclable materials from trash.
- Consider composting options at home or see if your city or town offers a composting program.
- Conserve energy by turning off lights and electrical appliances when not in use.
- Change to LED lightbulbs.
- Try to avoid using lots of harsh chemicals when cleaning.
- Cut down on the amount of meat you eat. Avoiding meat 2 or 3 meals a week can have an impact on reducing your carbon footprint.
- Shop and buy local products to reduce shipping costs and transportation.
- Keep plants around. Plant a tree nearby, have plants in your home or office space, don't pave over gardens and keep things as green as possible.
- Volunteer for clean-ups in your community.
- Drive less. Bike, use public transportation and walk more.