

- ▶ Organic food on a budget
- ▶ Be cautious when buying used
- ▶ Beware of energy leaks

Save some green by going green

There are lots of ways to go green to help the environment, but going green can also help your wallet. Many of the changes people make to better the planet result in a cost savings too.

Use cold water to wash your clothes. Skip the dryer and hang your clothes to dry. You can string a clothes line in your basement or laundry room. During the summer months, hang your clothes outside. You'll consume less energy and see a reduction in your electric bill.

For every degree you lower your thermostat in the winter or raise it in the summer, you can save between 1 to 3 percent on your energy bills. Adjust your temperature settings at night and while you're away to help keep your heating and cooling costs under control.

There are some easy ways to cut back on your water consumption, and your water bill, too. Do you water plants and flowers? If so, set out buckets to collect rain water and run off water from your downspouts. This water can be used to water plants. Try taking shorter showers. If you have 4 people in your household, and you each shorten your shower by 5 minutes, you'll save between 32 to 80 gallons of water a day!

Ask your electric company if they'll provide a free energy audit of your home. Many electric companies will do this and recommend ways to reduce your energy usage. If your company doesn't provide this service, you can do your own audit. See the Resource box on the back page.

There are dozens and dozens of ways to save money and help the environment. Look around your home and see how many ways you can come up with.

Did you know ...

There are vampires lurking in your home? We're not talking about the fanged, blood sucking creatures found in horror movies. The vampires we're talking about are appliances and cords that are slowly sucking electricity from your home.

Anything left turned on or plugged in when not in use is using electricity. While it may not seem like much, that electricity seeping into your home can add up to hundreds of dollars a year.

What can you do?

Turn off appliances when they aren't in use. Don't sleep with the television on or leave lights turned on all over the house. Don't leave your computer turned on 24/7.

Also, unplug power cords meant to charge things like mobile phones and laptops when they aren't charging something. Power is flowing through those cords even when the other end isn't plugged into anything.



Q: I want to save money and help the environment by buying as many things used as possible, so I do a lot of shopping at places like the Goodwill or through places like Craigslist. Is there anything that I shouldn't buy used because of safety issues?

A: It is wonderful that you're following the three Rs of being green (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle). But, yes, there are some things you should never buy used or you should use great care when purchasing.

When it comes to baby items, never, ever buy a used car seat. Once a car seat has been in an accident, it cannot be used again. If you're buying from a stranger, you don't know if the seat has been in an accident. Also, many people don't realize that car seats "expire." After 5 years a car seat should not be used.

Do not buy drop-side cribs. That applies to old or new cribs, but older drop-side cribs are especially dangerous.

Be careful when buying soft furniture, and especially mattresses, that could potentially harbor bed bugs and bacteria.

Finally, be wary of used electronics, particularly items like laptops and plasma television sets. Laptops get knocked around a lot and may not be in the best condition. Plasma televisions wear down over time and are very expensive to repair if they break.

Eating organic food on a budget

As people become more concerned about the environment and their own health, they may begin to consider adding organic foods to their diet. But eating organic can be very expensive.

Organic foods can cost more than double what the non-organic versions cost, but there are ways to introduce organic foods to your diet without completely busting your budget.

First, shop around. Your regular, large chain grocery store may only have limited organic choices and is likely pricey too. Check out local Farmers' Markets. The produce will be fresher and less expensive than a chain store.

No matter where you're shopping there are two simple rules that will help keep your food costs down: Buy what's in season and buy in bulk.

Produce in season is always less expensive than the stuff that is out of season.

Buying in bulk generally keeps the price down. Consider joining a buying club where the food is purchased in bulk for a better price, and the cost is divided among the members. If you're buying in bulk on your own, just be prepared to properly package and freeze everything you won't be able to use in a timely manner. Generally organic food should be eaten within six months of freezing.

You'll pay less for organic food if you buy store brands, so be prepared to make changes if you're a brand loyal shopper. As long as the food is stamped as USDA certified organic, you know you're getting a quality product.

Like with any grocery shopping, watch for coupons and in-store specials on organic brands. Stock up when things go on sale, especially if organic meat goes on sale. Meat is one of the priciest items on the menu, so buying on sale and freezing it for future use really helps keep the budget under control.

In addition to buying meat on sale, cut back on the meat in your diet. Try having several meat-free meals each week. This is a valuable cost cutting tip even for those who aren't trying to eat organic.

If you can't afford to eat all organic all the time, or it's difficult to find organic products in your area, introduce some organic foods into your diet.

There are some fruits and vegetables that are more important to buy organic than others.

Produce with thicker, tougher skin is more resistant to contamination by pesticides. Recently the Environmental Working Group released a list of the produce that contains the most pesticides, and the produce that is least contaminated by pesticides. Try sticking to organic for the most susceptible produce.

The Most Contaminated:

- Celery
- Peaches
- Strawberries
- Apples
- Domestic blueberries
- Nectarines
- Sweet bell peppers
- Spinach, kale and collard greens
- Cherries
- Potatoes
- Imported grapes
- Lettuce

The Least Contaminated:

- Onions
- Avocados
- Sweet corn
- Pineapples
- Mango
- Sweet peas
- Asparagus
- Kiwi fruit
- Cabbage
- Eggplant
- Cantaloupe
- Watermelon
- Grapefruit
- Sweet potatoes
- Sweet onions

Resources

The Daily Green. This web site has information about conducting your own energy audit:
www.dailygreen.com

VegCooking. This web site offers vegetarian recipes including a section about meat replacement.
www.vegcooking.com

Nature Moms. This web site offers tips about raising a "green family" including organic shopping on a budget.
www.naturemoms.com/blog/

The Advantage Challenge

Advantage challenges you to ...

Make more meatless meals to save money in your food budget.

Look for new and creative recipes that don't contain meat. Or take some of your tried and true recipes and swap lentils, extra vegetables or tofu for the meat.

When you're cooking with spices and seasonings, you'll hardly miss the meat.

The key is to be creative and willing to try new things.

Advantage

2403 Sidney St., Suite 400
Pittsburgh, PA 15203
(888) 511-2227
www.advantageccs.org

