



# Make Eco-Friendly Choices

## CHALLENGE

Protect your health & the environment

## Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Make Eco-Friendly Choices".
2. Create a plan to make eco-friendly choices to protect your health and the environment.
3. Keep a record of your completed health challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



When you're thirsty, you turn on the tap and expect cold water to flow. You grab a glass, fill it up, and take a drink. It's refreshing.

**But what if the water you're drinking contains bacteria or some other chemical that could make you sick?**

At home, you think about washing dishes and getting the laundry done. Maybe you worry about having a clean house for surprise guests. It's great when you're caught up.

**But what if your clean house still contains harmful chemicals in the walls, floors, or insulation?**

You know pollution can be harmful to plants and wildlife. But too much exposure to pollution, harmful chemicals and poor air quality can be harmful to people too. Even too much noise or time in the sun can take its toll on your health.

Making environmentally-friendly choices is just as important as good eating habits, regular exercise, adequate sleep, and regular check-ups. Want to protect your health and the environment? Take this month's health challenge to Make Eco-Friendly Choices.



## Gauge Your Green IQ

How much do you know about personal environmental health? Take this quiz to find out.



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1.   Some homes may contain toxic levels of radon, mold, or lead that can be harmful.
2.   Exercising outside when air quality is poor can lead to breathing problems.
3.   Most produce is already washed to remove germs and bacteria, so you don't have to wash it at home.
4.   If drinking water comes from the tap, it's always safe to drink.
5.   Exposure to chemicals used in cleaning supplies, hair care products, plastic containers, etc., may lead to health problems.

How did you do? Not all produce is pre-washed and may be tainted with fecal matter and chemicals. In the U.S., about 92% of all tap water sources are safe to drink.<sup>1</sup> But tap water from some municipal sources or wells could be contaminated. Being aware of your environment can help you take steps to protect your health.

Answers: 1.True. 2.True. 3.False. 4.False. 5.True.

## Health Alert: Pay Attention to These 7 Environmental Factors

What is your personal health environment? It's the things in your life, home, office, and surroundings that can have an impact on your health.

A recent study found that nearly 25% of deaths around the world are linked to modifiable environmental factors.<sup>2</sup>

Paying attention to the things around you can protect your health, prevent disease, and improve your quality of life.

Here are seven environmental factors that can impact your health:

- |                        |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Water quality       | 5. Sun exposure |
| 2. Air quality         | 6. Noise        |
| 3. Food safety         | 7. Technology   |
| 4. Hazardous chemicals |                 |



## Eco-Friendly Environment: 7 Habits to Make Your Life Healthier

You can't control every factor in your environment. But you can try. Practice these seven habits to improve your environmental health:

### 1. Drink clean water

Tap water in the U.S. is generally safe to drink.<sup>3</sup> But it doesn't take much for water to be dirtied. A broken pipe, flooding, or chemical spill can make water unsafe for drinking. Drink bottled water in a reusable container.

- Use a water filter.
- Ask for water quality testing results from the local health department.
- Have your water tested by a professional.

### 2. Breathe clean air

You need more than just a breath of fresh air for good health. You need to breathe clean air all the time. Weather patterns, secondhand smoke, pollution, and chemicals you can't see can all compromise air quality.<sup>4</sup>

- Live in an older home? Have it tested for radon, mold, and lead.
- If you smoke, quit. And even if you don't, avoid secondhand smoke.
- When air quality is poor, follow health advisories.
- Follow air-quality safety practices at work.

### 3. Know your food

The more you follow a plant-based diet, the more likely you'll avoid food-related problems. Know where your food comes from and how it is made. This can lower your risk of getting sick from eating food that may contain bacteria or other contaminants.

- Always wash fruits and vegetables before eating.<sup>5</sup>
- Consider buying organic foods raised without

12 fruits & veggies you must wash <https://tinyurl.com/3z8ac36z>

pesticides, herbicides, antibiotics, or growth hormones.

- If you eat fish, choose fish low in mercury such as salmon, tilapia, trout, or sardines.
- Make sure perishable foods are stored properly.

### 4. Protect your skin

A little time in the sun can help your body get the vitamin D it needs for good health. Sunshine even helps improve your mood. But too much sun raises your risk for sunburn, skin damage, and melanoma.

- Avoid being in the sun from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This is when the sun's ultraviolet rays are the most damaging.
- Wear protective clothing and a hat.
- Use sunscreen (SPF 15+) if you will be in the sun for more than 10 minutes.<sup>6</sup>
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes.
- See your doctor if you notice any skin problems to check for cancer.

### 5. Beware of hazardous chemicals

Exposure to common household chemicals may be harmful to your health. Chemicals used to make things like cosmetics, plastics, and cleaning supplies have been linked to certain types of cancer, heart disease, upper respiratory problems, and others.<sup>7</sup>

- Limit or avoid eating foods packaged in plastics.
- Use glass containers in the microwave instead of plastic containers that may release harmful chemicals when heated.
- Eat more fresh foods and

Health risks of cleaning supplies <https://tinyurl.com/3xk399p5>

ingredients instead of processed foods. Make sure containers used to store liquids aren't made with Bisphenol A (BPA). It's been linked to brain, breast, and prostate cancer.

- Pay attention to health advisories about products recalled for lead and other hazardous chemicals.

### 6. Protect your hearing

Did you know up to 24% of adults have hearing loss from exposure to loud noises?<sup>8</sup> Prevent hearing loss by protecting your ears from loud noise.

- Avoid cranking up the volume on listening devices.
- Wear ear plugs or protective headphones when you're around loud noises.
- Don't listen to loud music in the car or confined space for too long.

### 7. Manage technology

If you're among the masses who rely on a smartphone or tablet, you're not alone. Technology can make your life easier. But too much of a good thing can lead to problems.<sup>9</sup>

- Do not send or read text messages when you drive.
- Use a headset or speakerphone to make a call.
- Limit screen time (computers, TV, electronic devices) to protect your vision and your health.

By taking a closer look at the link between your health and your environment, you'll start to notice ways to improve. Small changes and good habits can improve your health, make you feel better, and help you live longer.



### References

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# Make Eco-Friendly Choices

**CHALLENGE**  
Protect your health & the environment

### Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or add to your digital calendar).
2. Create a plan to make eco-friendly choices to protect your health and the environment.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and choices to make eco-friendly choices.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, week, and at the end of the month. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____		
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I made eco-friendly choices

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

### Other wellness projects completed this month:

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_