



OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Making It Greener, Together

EPA's Tips for a Happy and Healthy Summer

There's still plenty of summer left for planning fun activities, such as beach trips, hiking, and gardening. Follow these Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) helpful tips -- good for your health, your wallet, and your environment.

Air Quality

People with heart and lung disease, older adults and children are at greater risk from the presence of pollutants in the air and should closely monitor the air quality in their area. AirNow's Air Quality Index (AQI) translates data into color categories so people can better understand what actions to take to protect their health. For more information and a real-time map: <http://www.airnow.gov/>. You can download the AQI via mobile application for your smartphone: <https://www.airnow.gov/airnow-app/>

Beach Safety

When you spend time at the beach this summer, stay safe with these best practices. Swim safely, protect yourself from the sun with broad-spectrum sunscreen, stay hydrated by drinking water, watch for trash and other signs of pollution, and report dangers you see to lifeguards or other beach workers. For more information: <http://water.epa.gov/type/oceb/beaches/dosdents.cfm>

Bed Bugs

Traveling is fun; bed bugs are not. Take steps when away from home to avoid bringing home unwelcome visitors. Inspect the mattress and headboard where you will be staying for the presence of bed bugs. Leave your luggage on a luggage rack, not on the bed or floor, and try to keep luggage away from the bed. You can find additional tips on avoiding bed bugs here: <https://www.epa.gov/bedbugs>

Community Environment

Your community encompasses the people in your neighborhood and the space you share. Your community's air, water, and land are subject to environmental concerns. To learn about environmental conditions in your community and ways to prevent pollution visit: <https://www.epa.gov/nep/community-culture-and-environment>

Energy Star

The average family spends 20 percent of its home utility bill on cooling. Cooling bills can be lowered by giving your air conditioner a break while you are asleep or when no one is home. Properly using a programmable thermostat can save you \$180 a year on your energy bill. If you're in the market for a new air conditioner, dehumidifier, or ceiling fan look for one that has earned the ENERGY STAR label at https://www.energystar.gov/products/central_air_conditioners

Fuel Economy

To save money and gas, follow these tips: roll the windows down when driving at lower speeds; use the AC at highway speeds, park in the shade or use a sunshade, and read about the AC system in your car's owner's manual. Additionally, complete needed maintenance and ensure tires are properly inflated. Learn more here: <https://fueleconomy.gov/>

Insects

While some insect bites are benign, biting insects can carry dangerous diseases. Using the right insect repellent and taking preventive actions can repel ticks, mosquitoes, and other biting insects. Guidelines for areas to avoid bites and clothing to wear, can be found here: <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents>
Additional resources are available at <https://www.epa.gov/pesticides>

Lawn Care

With your grass shooting up, it is time to mow. For a healthy lawn, cutting height is recommended between 2.5 and 3.5 inches. Mow often enough to cut less than a third of total grass height. Leave clippings in the grass to recycle the nitrogen and prevent filling landfills. To learn more about lawn care, visit: <http://www2.epa.gov/safepestcontrol/lawn-and-garden>

Pest Control

Pest control in the garden often refers to the use of chemical pesticides. To ensure public safety, EPA offers a "[Citizen's Guide to Pest Control and Pesticide Safety](#)" as well as tailored guides on protecting your [garden](#), [children](#), and [household](#). These guides offer advice on pesticide selection for health and pollinator protection and best-alternative environmentally friendly practices. Additional resources are available at <http://www2.epa.gov/safepestcontrol/lawn-and-garden> and <http://www2.epa.gov/pollinator-protection>

SunWise

Check the Ultraviolet (UV) Index anytime by downloading EPA's app (epa.gov/enviro/mobile) to plan outdoor activities while preventing overexposure to the sun. Apply a palm-full of sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher that provides broad-spectrum protection 15 minutes before heading outdoors. Reapply every two hours. Wear protective clothing, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses. Seek shade between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Go here to learn more:

<https://archive.epa.gov/multimedia/web/multimedia/sunwise/index.html>

Watering

When it is time to water your lawn or plants, avoid watering in the middle of the day when the hot sun will evaporate the water. Instead, water during the early morning and evening, for a total of one inch of water per week, including rainfall. A WaterSense labeled automatic sprinkler can take the guesswork out of watering and save money. Find more watering guidelines here:

<https://www.epa.gov/watersense/watering-tips>