

# Low-tox Living Tips

1. Don't forget to hydrate. Spring water is often the healthiest, but filtering tap water can help lower contaminants. Adding a splash of fruit juice can help electrolytes, and drinking out of glass is best if you can. Plastics and metals can leach stuff into your drinking water.
2. Open windows. Even in a great house, one thing builds up universally—carbon dioxide.



Last summer when the western US and Canada wildfires were bad, I had windows closed for longer than ever before out here. Eventually I got sick from classic high CO<sub>2</sub> symptoms and had to open despite the smoke. I felt better within 30 minutes!

Normally, I try to have my window open and a fan on in the laundry area blowing out and pulling air through, every night before bed.

Here is an interesting article on CO<sub>2</sub> studies:

[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5106237/Open-window-help-sleep-stopping-CO<sub>2</sub>-build-up.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5106237/Open-window-help-sleep-stopping-CO2-build-up.html)

3. Mold-free humidification—fill a crock pot part-way with water and turn on high with the lid off. This is a great idea from the MCS community!

(Be sure to practice safety, like keeping kids and pets away from it. Also be sure to check the water level often.)

Unlike humidifiers, there are no small interior parts and nozzles which tend to grow mold. Also, a ceramic crock pot in a metal case will cut down on the plastic off-gassing which most humidifiers have.

I have a cold this week and was so grateful for this idea. Despite some rain this spring, it is dry here.

4. Lean toward natural fibers such as cotton and hemp. Synthetics are often made from petroleum and/or processed with chemicals. Homemade cotton quilts are a great way to avoid potential flame retardant chemicals in bedding, too. (I have patched this one so much, it is more patch than quilt. 😊)



5. Switch to digital books to reduce ink, scents picked up on books, and even potential mold in books. At one point when I was sicker, ink from books would make me so sleepy as to fall asleep while reading. I am doing much better now, though.

A caveat: reading on computer screen is harder on the eyes. 😞 So maybe a combination like I do, plus audio.

One point on children: if your child has trouble concentrating while reading from books, particularly textbooks with colored pictures, there is a possibility the ink or book is affecting them!

Try different books to see what happens; have them read outside and with the book farther from their face to see if it helps.

6. Switch to glass storage in the pantry. Some store packaging, such as bags holding dry beans, even picks up scent from the surroundings. We use Mason jars and leftover Bubbies pickle jars.
7. Try using glass for storage in the refrigerator. Sometimes we will



use a small bowl and cover it with a small plate. We also love the containers in the 2nd photo. The lids are plastic, but they are a hard plastic and are not problematic for me.





8. Upon returning from errands, put "scented" or contaminated clothing immediately into a metal container, such as a clean, new trash can bought for the purpose. With a tight lid, this keeps scent contained and eases the pressure to wash clothing right away.





9. Leave shoes in a mudroom or away from living space. Shoes pick up all kinds of toxins and cannot easily be washed thoroughly. If put in a closet or vented container of some kind, I would recommend something added to the environment to absorb moisture. Shoes, especially soft ones like sneakers, tend to hold moisture and can mold. (I would not recommend keeping them in an un-vented, tight container for this reason.)

We have "home only" shoes or slippers for each family member who wants them, that we can wear around the house or keep handy for going outside.

10. Keep coats in a mudroom with an air purifier. Ours hang on the mudroom door between the mudroom and laundry room.

If you don't have a mudroom but do have a closet, I would suggest adding something to absorb moisture to the closet as well as something to absorb scent, like a pan of baking soda or dry rice. (Change this out periodically.) There are also charcoal "bags" on the market for absorbing scent. If you have a severely chemically affected person in the house, lay a clean sheet over the coats to help contain scent and other contaminants.

Never hang damp coats in a closet--this is a recipe for mold.

11. Switch from crayons to colored pencils. I used to love the smell of crayons! But most of them are made from petroleum. 🙄 I do much better with colored pencils although still reacted sometimes except to the even-more-natural clay-based pencils.



12. Use foil tape for your taping needs. It is amazing to me how much regular tape stinks. That doesn't mean it is necessarily a worse chemical than others, but I do think it affects me quite a bit if a lot of regular tape is used near me. The foil in foil tape blocks most of its own adhesive. Therefore, there will be a smell (chemical) when applying, but once it is taped down tightly, the chemical should be “mostly” blocked.

[https://www.amazon.com/Nashua-Aluminum-Multi-Purpose-Thick-Length/dp/B01LZ439V5/ref=sr\\_1\\_4?s=home-garden&ie=UTF8&qid=1526419793&sr=1-4&keywords=nashua+foil+tape](https://www.amazon.com/Nashua-Aluminum-Multi-Purpose-Thick-Length/dp/B01LZ439V5/ref=sr_1_4?s=home-garden&ie=UTF8&qid=1526419793&sr=1-4&keywords=nashua+foil+tape)

13. Let the dandelions grow, pull weeds (good exercise), and/or find natural weed killer recipes instead of herbicide.

People hypothesized that herbicide would not hurt humans because it was made to affect plants, but it turns out herbicide has numerous very, very bad effects on humans.

One of the top effects is on the "plants" inside the human body—beneficial bacteria. Our bodies need these bacteria to function well. When affected by herbicide, the lack of beneficial bacteria leads to a whole host of body processes going wrong.

Between that and how herbicide affects hormones and other processes in the body, a terrible variety of health problems is linked to herbicide.

14. Use regular soap instead of antibacterial soaps. Even 16 years ago when our daughter was in the newborn ICU, the doctors told us to wash our hands with normal soap rather than antibacterial, but for a long time. So we would sing "Happy Birthday," and they said that was about the amount of time needed with a good scrub to get the hands clean.

One risk with antibacterial soap is that it affects good bacteria. This is the problem: anything that kills bad bacteria has the potential to kill good bacteria, too.

Even worse, the overuse of antibacterial products is contributing to the development of antimicrobial-resistant bacteria.

But the good news is that with a good, long, hand scrub with regular soap, germs can still be reduced, without the use of chemicals. (People don't need antibacterial wipes or sanitizer either.)

15. Try a natural bug spray this year. Here is a good place to start for a recipe and ideas:

<https://momsaware.org/newsletters/newsletter-archives/listid-1/mailid-60-aware-newsletter-safe-summer-diy-bug-spray-and-special-offer.html> (I love this lady and her website.)

16. Make the switch to Castile soap. Every other soap that I have found, even non-antibacterial, contains chemicals. I eventually figured out that I did not do well with them.

I think because we use soap so much in our daily lives, it is worth considering the relatively expensive Castile, to lower our toxic loads.

If you can tolerate natural essential oils and natural scents, you may enjoy a wide variety of lovely - smelling Castile soap they have out there now.

For some reason, I do not do well with the bar soaps myself, but I am fine with smelling them and others in my household using them. One bar soap even smells like chemical-filled soap we used to use, very fresh and nice. 😊

I use unscented liquid Castile for shampoo as well, with a white grain vinegar rinse.

This is the bar soap I use and absolutely LOVE:

<https://www.canarywhiskers.com/collections/full-size-bar-soap/products/tallow-soap-heritage-bar-soap-series>

17. Use only baking soda or vinegar in the laundry. (Not both since they sort of cancel each other out.)





Sometimes people make their own laundry detergent, but we decided why go to the energy and expense, when these simple products work well? 😊 Plus even borax has health risks. 😞

<https://www.ewg.org/enviroblog/2011/02/borax-not-green-alternative-its-cracked-be#.WwW9xIoh3IU>

However, baking soda does a great job at getting the average load of laundry clean. Sometimes we run things through twice or more.

For septic systems, be sure you balance it out if you use a lot of baking soda. I think adding probiotics to the septic should help as well.

Be sure to get grain-based and NOT petroleum-based vinegar. One time I accidentally smelled petroleum-based vinegar. It was wild—it smelled exactly like grain white vinegar but it made me very sick like petroleum.

For removing scents, we have found soaking in natural peppermint tea to be helpful.

For removing either mold cross-contamination or new-clothing chemicals, we have found multiple washings to be helpful. I saved some mildly musty clothing by washing 4 times before drying. Most new stuff I have to wash 15 times, sometimes more if it is going to be me wearing it.

18. Use only baking soda or (non-petroleum) vinegar, lemon juice, essential oils and the like for cleaning. It takes more scrubbing to clean this way, with no fancy cleaning chemicals. But then you burn more calories, so you can go for that chocolate cake later, right? :)

Soaking sometimes helps. To soak in vinegar, set down paper towels in tub or sink (try toilet paper in toilet), and wet with

vinegar so the paper sticks and soaks the grime. Come back later and scrub, adding baking soda for mild scrubbing action if the surface can handle that.

19. Keep up with home maintenance, do not let leaks go, and do not kill mold. Many molds create toxins, some of which are so toxic that they can cause otherwise-healthy people to drop.

Dead mold is still toxic, so this is why it should be removed, not killed or treated. Unfortunately mold can grow within 24 to 48 hours of a building material being wet.

For more information, you can take a look at this article I wrote:

<http://www.blackhillpicturebooks.com/2017/11/02/what-to-do-if-you-find-mold-in-your-house/>

For lots more information on mold illness, check out

<https://paradigmchange.me/>

20. Use cotton barrier cloth on furniture which may contain flame retardants, foam, etc. I sewed this barrier cloth to sort of 😊 fit this soft chair. For best results, wash the cloth frequently or when contaminated by chemicals.



<https://organiccottonplus.com/products/barrier-cloth-6-oz-100>

21. Wash new clothing before wearing and try to buy clothing from your own country. Non-organic clothing comes with a variety of chemicals, and clothing shipped from other countries can be treated directly with pesticides in order to combat insects brought into another country. Of course, try to reduce chemicals by purchasing clothing free of antimicrobial chemicals and sunblock chemicals. Organic clothing is, of course, a great option if you can afford it, either purchased or homemade from organic cloth.
22. Grow your own organic food. Use mechanical, predator, and other natural methods to control insects and weeds.

23. Scrub produce from the grocery store, scrub hard. Most people wash their produce for a variety of reasons, but did you know that produce can have fabric softener and other scent on it? In fact, we have purchased produce, even organic, that we tried everything we could think of to get the scent off, and we could not. So I finally had to peel it to eat it and NOT ingest likely-petrochemical-derived scent. Sad. When I decided to eat some “scented” blueberries anyhow, I got sick from them.

Many stores are full of scent, from customers, workers, building materials which absorbed it from years of scent carried in, detergents and other items for sale, etc. Some friends have even reported produce bags which seemed to be scented. These scent molecules are made to disperse so we can smell them. They land on everything. 😊



24. Reduce electromagnetic frequencies (EMFs) which may be affecting your body. Sound like tin hat stuff? LOL I didn't really believe it either until I got really sick and felt the effects on my weak body.

<https://bodyecology.com/art.../little-known-dangers-of-emf.php>

My symptoms were tingling, fatigue, brain fog, severe visual disturbances (ophthalmic migraines), nerve problems, irregular heartbeat, and near fainting. Also nausea and vomiting, but those seemed maybe more connected with radiation? I do not really understand the difference between EMF exposure and radiation, and maybe it does not matter too much. Eventually the nausea effect even happened from sitting in the sun, which of course would be radiation.

That went away very fast after moving here to this low-tox house, though.

What you can do:

- Limit use of cell phones and do not charge them in your bedroom at night.
- Eliminate cordless phones in the house. (We actually love our corded landline.)
- Ask your internet provider to reduce the wifi output. I think ours is set at 30%. We do not need it outside or far away. (Update: we no longer use wifi, only ethernet cords.)
- Do not put your body between the computer and the wifi router. This does seem to make a difference.
- Turn off your wifi at night. (Or remove the ethernet cord/computer from your room.)
- Do not stand near the microwave while it is running.
- Unplug everything at night in your bedroom.

I am sure others like me have other great tips.

25. Ditch fluorescent and LED lights and use incandescent instead. Interestingly I have had an aversion to fluorescent lights since the mold house. But in 2015 I developed actual symptoms—nausea, vomiting, ophthalmic migraines.

This article discusses one problem with fluorescent lights.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3222423/>

This article present a great summary of the issues. <http://it-takes-time.com/2016/01/12/how-to-find-safe-light-bulbs/>



26. Run a good VOC air purifier. I used to have an old Aller air. I do not know if it is the best one out there, but I did like it. Try to get one with no antimicrobial chemicals added to the filters. I also recommend avoiding units which have UV light because I think it can break up mold into smaller pieces which are still toxic.  
<https://www.allerair.com/>
27. Reconsider your supplements. Most people consider supplements to be healthy, and for some people, some supplements do increase body health and function. But they can also be full of additives, contaminants, and substances left over from processing.  
<http://info.achs.edu/blog/5-dangerous-ingredients-in-your-vitamins-and-dietary-supplements>
28. If you are feeling bad, take a shower and change clothes. It might be toxins on your skin!
29. Process emotions. Even unprocessed grief can be toxic to your body!
30. Practice relaxation, which helps with both body function and detoxing. Adrenaline and cortisol can corrode the liver.