

Poko Press

The Official Poko Loko Newsletter
April 2024

Our Lucky Charms



April Activities

April 1
April Fool's Day



April 22
Earth Day

April 23
Passover



April 24
Wear Blue and Green
to celebrate Earth Week

April 26
Arbor Day



Summer is just around
the corner!! Don't
forget to sign up for
Good Times
Summer Day Camp!!



Spring is finally here!!

Please check your child's cubby and bring home all winter clothes and boots. Please also bring in a change of clothes that is appropriate for the warmer weather. Please also make sure that your child has socks, slippers, or indoor shoes to wear in the classroom. Finally, please make sure that everything is labeled with your child's name. Thanks! We can't wait to get outside and enjoy the warm weather!

MARCH MADNESS



Ways Your Family Can Protect the Earth

By Kristine Breese From: **Parents**

Too stressed to save the environment? Check out these easy ways to go green.

Real-World Ways to Go Green

We'd all like to live a little greener. And often, it's families who make the extra effort: Parents can't help but worry about how pesticides, pollutants, and tons of nonbiodegradable trash will affect their children's health and future. But sometimes, it seems as if protecting the earth and leading a hectic family life just don't mix. As much as you'd like to avoid drinking from juice boxes, using plastic bags, and spending half your paycheck on gas, as a parent, you've got lunches to pack, groceries to lug home, and a long list of errands to run. But you can take small steps to be more environmentally conscious.

These family-friendly strategies will help you begin to reduce, reuse, and recycle more efficiently -- without a complete lifestyle overhaul.

Best intention: Rinse and reuse all those plastic sandwich bags from your child's lunches.

Real-world solution: Create less waste by packing food in washable plastic containers or by using the right-size bag for the job -- sandwich bags for larger items and snack-size ones for pretzels or raisins. And remember that fruit is earth-friendly: Many varieties come in their own handy "wrapper" (their skin), so you don't need to bother with the added bag.

Best intention: Give up juice boxes and individually wrapped snacks.

Real-world solution: Save the prepackaged bites for lunch boxes, picnics, and times you're on the go; pour drinks into small plastic reusable sports bottles. For home, buy juice and snacks in bulk -- it's cheaper too -- and use nondisposable cups and plates.

Best intention: Trade in your SUV for a hybrid car.

Real-world solution: Only earth-conscious celebrities can afford to do this on a whim! If it's not time for a trade-in, help reduce greenhouse gases -- and save money at the pump -- by keeping your car well-tuned. If you combine using the proper grade motor oil, checking that your tires are properly inflated, and replacing an old air filter, you can increase your miles per gallon (mpg) by up to 15 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Removing excess weight from your car (getting rid of an extra 100 pounds of toys and bikes in your trunk increases your mpg by up to 2 percent) and driving the speed limit also help. And don't assume you need air-conditioning on hot days. Rolling down the windows can offer relief and doesn't guzzle gas.

Recycling and Conservation

Best intention: Walk or ride a bike for nearby errands.

Real-world solution: Because short car trips are the worst polluters and gas guzzlers, combine errands whenever possible. Make a plan from your to-do list: Can you return the library books on the way to the dry cleaners before picking up the kids and then hit the supermarket before coming home? Or, if you work, walk to the cleaners and video store near your office on your lunch break. And if possible, why not try the occasional car-free Saturday and see what you can accomplish using just strollers and bikes?

Best intention: Recycle every can, bottle, and piece of paper, and fertilize your garden with composted leftovers.

Real-world solution: If your city doesn't run a recycling program, recycle your cans and bottles yourself, and make collecting them a family project. Have the kids stash the refunded change in a jar, and set it aside for a summer-vacation fund or a special toy. As for composting, scatter food scraps (except meat, dairy products, cooking oil, or grease) in the garden to provide nutrients for the plants.

Best intention: Swear off toxic household cleansers.

Real-world solution: Yes, those potent cleaners may make housework faster and more convenient. But the bad news -- for your health and for the planet -- is that they introduce harsh chemicals into the atmosphere. But rather than swearing off these products, simply substitute nontoxic cleansers for some jobs. Consider using vinegar diluted with 25 percent water to clean windows and mirrors, and try baking soda to scrub your oven, bathtub, and sinks. You can also try vegetable-based cleaning products, particularly on floors, where little ones crawl and are more likely to ingest chemical residues. Save some paper while you're at it by switching to reusable rags to get rid of the grime.

Best intention: Conserve water and energy by washing your dishes by hand and letting them air-dry and by rewearing clothes to reduce laundry.

Real-world solution: This would be reasonable if a) dishwashing were a quick chore and b) kids stayed clean for longer than five minutes. Instead, be environmentally savvy by doing large loads of laundry and only running a full dishwasher. Choose unscented laundry and dish products, which contain fewer chemicals and make the wastewater less toxic (cut packaging by opting for the super-concentrated varieties). And good news for whoever has after-dinner cleanup duty: Most newer dishwashers are so efficient that you just have to scrape and load, which means there's no wasteful prerinsing to do. When it's time to replace an appliance, look for an energy-efficient model with the government's Energy Star logo; get purchasing tips at energystar.gov.

Best intention: Install light sensors so your lamps turn off automatically when people leave the room.

Real-world solution: Add "light monitor" to your family's list of household chores. The monitor makes periodic sweeps of the house to make sure lights are off in unused rooms. When lights are left on, the culprit has to put a quarter into a penalty jar. Bonus: Try using compact fluorescent lightbulbs, which help lower your electricity bill and last longer than traditional bulbs.

More Ways to Go Green

Use every piece of paper twice. A letter with typos becomes a piece of drawing paper for the kids, comics become wrapping paper, and old magazines can be cut up and made into collages.

Be a smarter supermarket shopper. When you finish unpacking your groceries, save the bags and use them to line your trash cans and litter box.

Ditch the paper trail. Is your house littered with notes about doctors' appointments and PTA meetings? Skip the memo pads and write everything on a dry-erase board -- that way, the whole family stays informed.

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Order in wisely. Can't face cooking tonight? Make sure nothing more than your food is delivered. When you call, request no napkins, plastic utensils, prepackaged condiments, and anything else you have at home.

Is Your Lawn Safe?

Experts are increasingly worried that exposure to "weed and feed" lawn-care products can lead to childhood cancer, as well as neurological and hormonal damage. "Young children, whose brains and organs are rapidly developing, are most vulnerable," says John Wargo, PhD, professor of environmental policy and risk management at Yale University.

There are risks, says the Environmental Protection Agency: "Pesticides can cause harm to humans, animals, or the environment because they are designed to kill or otherwise adversely affect living organisms." Still, the EPA permits lawn-care pesticides to be sold (often in non-childproof bags) because regulators assume that parents will take proper precautions. But it's easy for children who play in the grass to swallow, inhale, or absorb pesticides through their skin -- especially if it doesn't rain after you use the product -- and people and pets can track the chemicals indoors, says Nancy Alderman, president of Environment and Human Health, a nonprofit organization founded by scientists to conduct research and recommend public policy.

Visit safelawns.org -- a coalition of nonprofit organizations and for-profit companies -- to view videos about organic lawn care. For more information about keeping pesticides away from your local schools and playing fields, go to beyondpesticides.org.

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More Shenanigans

