



**Use less energy.
Produce less waste.
Save money.**

Tel: (403) 475-7505 lauren@earthwisesolutions.ca

Get Green on the Way to School

Going back to school is a fresh start. This year try making that fresh start even fresher by greening how you get ready for back to school.

The first step is to go back to the green basics, the 3 R's: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Apply these basic principles to all your back to school needs. Ask yourself:

- What do you need? Do an inventory of what you already have and shop with a list to reduce impulse purchases.
- Does it have to be new or can it be shared, rented, borrowed?
- Is it reusable? Avoid disposable and individually packaged items.
- What can I do with it after I'm done with it? Is it recyclable or compostable? Freecycle, trade or donate your old stuff.

Here are some ideas on how to make greener choices on some common back to school purchases.

1. Clothes:

- Check out children's consignment clothing stores. In Calgary go to www.calgaryconsignment.com for a store near you.
- Get your friends and neighbours together for a clothing swap. Put all the kids' clothes in piles according to size and gender then take turns picking. Try to invite families with different aged children so there are a variety of sizes.
- When buying new clothes look for those that are manufactured close to home, which means they have traveled a shorter distance to reach you and have not been produced in a sweatshop or using child labour. Look for sustainable fabrics like organic cotton, bamboo, soy, hemp and wool. Regular cotton production accounts for 25% of the world's pesticide use.

2. Lunches:

- Pack lunches in lunchboxes. There are varieties that come with containers for sandwiches, drinks and whatever else you want to put in your child's lunch. Send a cloth napkin and reusable utensils too.
- Avoid #7 plastics which may contain Bisphenol A. Some researchers say Bisphenol A can increase the risk of certain cancers, hamper fertility and contribute to childhood behavioral problems. These types of plastics are particularly dangerous when heated, so be especially aware if your child will be microwaving the container.
- Single serving containers use more packaging than buying a larger package and dividing it into single servings in a reusable container for your child's lunch. For example, individual sized yogurts use more packaging than buying a large container of yogurt and putting it into a reusable container.
- According to Clean Calgary Association the average a school-age child produces 67 pounds of waste per school year when eating a "disposable" lunch. That's 18,760 pounds of lunch waste per year in an average elementary school. They have lots of suggestions on how to start a "Litterless Lunch" campaign in your child's school. Go to www.cleancalgary.org and search Litterless Lunch. They also



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provide workshops on vermicomposting in the classroom (worms eating organic waste from lunches which kids think is super cool) and on setting up a school wide composting program.

- Remember your usual green eating tips: eat food from as close to home as possible or choose organic, and avoid excess packaging.

3. School supplies:

- Look for school supplies with recycled content, particularly post-consumer recycled content. This means that it is made with materials someone has used and recycled, not just waste materials generated in the manufacturing process.
- Look for supplies that you can reuse, recycle or compost. For example choose refillable or compostable pens.

4. Transportation:

- Start a walking or cycling school bus, where neighbourhood children walk or bike to and from school together under the supervision of an adult. This reduces traffic congestion and vehicle emissions around the school.
- Share the drive to school and save time, money, stress and the environment. Find like-minded parents in Calgary at www.schoolpool.ca.
- Don't idle. When you do drive your kids to school remember not to let the engine run. If you are stopped for more than 60 seconds turn off the engine to use less fuel and reduce emissions.

5. Personal care products & cosmetics:

- Talk to your tweens and teens about how to make healthy choices around personal care products and cosmetics. Recently I was shocked when I looked up the ingredients of my clear lip gloss online (they are not listed on the package). See how many you recognize:

INGREDIENTS: HYDROGENATED POLYISOBUTENE, ISOPROPYL ISOSTEARATE, DIISOSTEARYL DIMER DILINOLEATE, POLYBUTENE, PENTAERYTHRITYL TETRAISOSTEARATE, ETHYLENE/PROPYLENE/STYRENE COPOLYMER, ETHYLHEXY METHOXYCINNAMATE, OZOKERITE, CALCIUM ALUMINUM BOROSILICATE, LANOLIN OIL, PARFUM/FRAGRANCE, BUTYLENE/ETHYLENE/STYRENE COPOLYMER, TOCOPHERYL ACETATE, BUTYL METHOXYDIBENZOYLMETHANE, ISOPROPYLPARABEN, BUTYLPARABEN, ISOBUTYLPARABEN, SILI- CA, HEXYL CINNAMAL, BHT, LINALOOL, TIN OXIDE, CITRONELLOL, LIMO- NENE [May Contain/ Peut Contenir/+-: TITANIUM DIOXIDE (CI 77891), MICA (CI 77019), FD&C YELLOW NO. 5 ALUMINUM LAKE (CI 19140), D&C RED NO. 27 ALUMINUM LAKE (CI 45410), D&C RED NO. 6 BARIUM LAKE (CI 15850), IRON OXIDES (CI 77491, CI 77492, CI 77499), D&C RED NO. 7 CALCIUM LAKE (CI 15850), FD&C YELLOW NO. 6 ALUMINUM LAKE (CI 15985)].

- The free Skin Deep database evaluates more than 25,000 cosmetic and personal care products against 50 definitive toxicity and regulatory databases at www.cosmeticsdatabase.com. A Canadian alternative can be found at www.lesstoxicguide.ca.
- Teach your kids to read labels and to be particularly aware of vague ingredients like "fragrance". This benign sounding ingredient often includes phthalates, a



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family of chemicals banned in the European Union since 2003. According to Health Canada, "Rodent studies have found a range of effects associated with different phthalates. In general, phthalates have effects on laboratory animals that include changes to the liver, kidneys, reproductive systems, and birth defects. They are suspected of affecting hormone systems (also known as endocrine disruptors)." Decidedly uncool.

6. Electronics:

- Look for the Energy Star symbol on new computers and electronics. It identifies the most energy efficient models on the market and can be found on most anything electronic. Check ratings before you buy at www.energystar.gov. Also check out Greenpeace's Guide to Greener Electronics for their ratings of the most and least environmentally friendly electronics manufacturers.

7. Activism:

- Do you have a budding environmentalist in your midst? The Jack Leslie Youth Environment Grant funds youth initiated projects that have a positive impact on the environment in Calgary. www.cyfc.ca choose Programs or call 403-266-5448.
- BP has grants available to teachers for innovative classroom and extra-curricular projects focused on energy. Have your child suggest a class project and get the teacher to apply. www.bp.com
- Ensure your child's class is attending the Mayor's Environment Expo in June. This event offers interactive workshops, live theatre, student presentations and exhibits to showcase how every step helps decrease Calgary's ecological footprint. www.calgary.ca search Mayor's Environment Expo.
- If your older children are interested in what's green in Calgary encourage them to attend the EcoLiving Fair on September 27, 2008 at Mount Royal College to learn more about environmentally sustainable options. They also host the EcoLiving Tour which showcases Calgary area buildings that have incorporated practical solutions