

# Wellness

## EMPLOYEE

# report



## Going GREEN

### Creating a climate for change

You don't have to go far these days before you hear or read about something to do with climate change. But protecting the environment and repairing the damage already done seems like such a monumental task that it's only natural to ask, "How can one person make a difference in solving a global problem?"

We won't know if we don't try. And even by making a few small changes in our day-to-day lives we can help conserve energy – energy like the electricity we use inside our homes to power up the washing machine, the DVD player, and the microwave. Electricity is a staple of modern life, but if we want to help the environment, we need to use it wisely.

Greenhouse gases – a byproduct of burning fuel to power our cars, homes, and factories – prevent heat from escaping the atmosphere. Global warming is one measure of climate change and is seen in altered weather conditions: heat waves, record temperatures, retreating glaciers, rising sea levels. Our challenge is to figure out how to meet our energy needs in a way that moves us towards cleaner air, better health, and a slow down of global warming.

Individuals may look to government, business, and organizations to lead the development of technologies such as solar cells, wind turbines, tidal power generators, and other cleaner alternative sources of power. But each of us also needs to adopt new behaviours and attitudes at home and work to lessen our own contribution to the problem.

### Energy-saving tips at home

- ✓ Make "reduce, reuse, recycle" your mantra for modern life. Even supermarkets are on board, asking customers to bring their own bags for their groceries, and attempting to make plastic bags a thing of the past (it takes 1000 years for a plastic bag to decompose in a landfill site). By recycling paper, cardboard, cans and bottles and composting organic waste (such as yard trimmings), we can help reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with landfills. Visit <http://earth911.org/> for more tips, and for a list of recycling resources in your area.
- ✓ Install a programmable thermostat to dial back your home's energy needs when no one is home. Consider moving your thermostat

down 2 degrees in the winter, and for every degree you lower your thermostat you can save as much as two per cent off your bill.

- ✓ Insulate your attic and double-glaze your windows to retain heat as much as possible.
- ✓ Replace your lightbulbs. Replace incandescent bulbs with energy-saving compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). Install dimmer switches to reduce power usage.

**In the kitchen.** The older your appliances are, the more electricity they consume and waste. An older refrigerator, for example, can use up to one-tenth of all of the electricity used in your home. Today's models use 40 per cent less energy than those made 10 years ago. If you decide to replace any of your major appliances, be sure to look for the *Energy Star*<sup>®</sup>, which means the appliance has passed energy efficiency standards and is considered better for the environment. If you hold on to your older model, you can increase its efficiency by defrosting it regularly and cleaning the back of the fridge to make it more energy efficient.

Simple tips in the kitchen include checking your refrigerator's seal by slipping a sheet of paper between the seal and the fridge door. If it slides out easily when you close the door, you may need to replace the seal. If you have a newer model dishwasher, they can be 95 per cent more efficient than models made in the early 1970s. And keep in mind that if you rinse dishes under the tap beforehand, five minutes of running

water can use up as much as 115 litres of water, so scrape leftovers off the plate instead.

**Bathrooms.** There are some quick and easy ways to conserve energy in the bathroom, such as simply shutting off the taps while you brush your teeth. Opt for a shower over a bath, and install an energy efficient shower head, which can save 60 per cent of the water that would otherwise be used. You can also regulate the amount of water you use by choosing low-flush toilets and faucets when it's time to replace your old ones.

**Bedrooms.** Use power-saving LED nightlights. Put an extra blanket or two on your bed instead of using an electric blanket or turning up the heat.

**Laundry rooms.** Use a clothesline or clothes rack instead of the dryer. In case you do use the dryer, clean the filter before every load to increase efficiency. And think about investing in a front-loading washing machine, which can use 40 per cent less water for every load, and half the energy of traditional models. Instead of hot water, use cold or warm water and make sure you wash a full load instead of a half-full machine.

**Living room and family areas.** Get into the habit of shutting the lights off when you aren't in a room. Here's a new one: consider unplugging electronics and appliances when they're not being used. Just because a device isn't being used, it's likely still using electricity (think about the digital clock on your DVD player).

**Computers.** Our computers and monitors can guzzle up electricity when

we're not using them. Fortunately, newer models are more and more energy-conscious. A lot of people leave their computers on all the time, partially out of convenience, but also some people think they actually work better by being left on. In actual fact, the best thing to do if you don't want to shut the computer off completely, is simply to change the settings so the computer uses less power by going into sleep mode.

## Global warming: the science, effects, and solutions

You can learn more about global warming, and what you can do to make a difference, at David Suzuki's website ([www.davidsuzuki.org](http://www.davidsuzuki.org)), and [www.wwf.ca](http://www.wwf.ca), the Canadian website of the World Wildlife Fund.

Whether it's considering the efficiency of the vehicle you drive (or opting to walk, bike, or take the bus) or reducing your home heating and electricity use, living a more energy-efficient life will not only lower your utility bills, it will reduce the emissions that cause global warming. Every little bit helps, so talk to your family, pick something to start with and then create a real climate for change in your home and community.

The Energy Star name and the Energy Star symbol are registered trademarks of the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Sources: BC hydro – Power Smart for Home ([www.bchydro.com/powersmart/elibrary/elibrary617.html#2](http://www.bchydro.com/powersmart/elibrary/elibrary617.html#2)); <http://green.yahoo.com>; <http://www.greenlivingonline.com>; Nova Scotia Resource Recovery Fund Board ([www.rffb.com](http://www.rffb.com)); David Suzuki Foundation ([http://www.davidsuzuki.org/Climate\\_Change](http://www.davidsuzuki.org/Climate_Change)); Clean Nova Scotia ([www.clean.ns.ca](http://www.clean.ns.ca)); World Wildlife Fund ([www.wwf.ca](http://www.wwf.ca)); Earth 911 (<http://earth911.org>).



*Wellness Report* is part of the Health for Life<sup>®</sup> program and is published by Manulife Financial Group Benefits, 380 Weber Street North, Waterloo, Ontario N2J 4V7  
Please send your comments and suggestions to the EBN editor by fax: (519) 883-0406.

**Please Note:** *Wellness Report* is for information purposes only and is not intended to provide medical advice.

For additional copies of *Wellness Report* and to hear the audio podcast edition go to [www.manulife.ca/groupbenefits](http://www.manulife.ca/groupbenefits) and click on 'Newsletters.' *Wellness Report* is offered through Manulife Financial (The Manufacturers Life Insurance Company).

©2008 The Manufacturers Life Insurance Company. All rights reserved. Manulife Financial and the block design are registered service marks and trademarks of The Manufacturers Life Insurance Company and are used by it and its affiliates including Manulife Financial Corporation. Manulife Financial is not responsible for the availability or content of external websites.

(05/2008)