In recent decades, factory made products have been increasingly used in American homes and it’s easy to see why. Going to the grocery store or home goods store and buying pre-mixed products often takes less time and energy than making your own. However, producing these products creates some side effects that you may not be aware of. It makes sense: products made in a factory often use man-made chemicals we cannot get else. Below are three household toxins you may not know about and simple steps you can take to reduce or remove them from the home.

**Antibacterial Soap**
Sure, antibacterial soap sounds like a good idea. We are told that we need to reduce contact with germs and prevent the spread of diseases. What better way to do that than antibacterial soap?
The problem with it is that there has not been research that shows these products work better than soap and water. They have not proven how the active ingredient “triclosan” actually works and in fact has only been proven effective in toothpaste. Further, there is evidence that shows it also kills good bacteria - the kind needed to fight illness.

What’s the solution? Start using old-fashioned soap and water. Not only will it probably cost less, but it works as well or better than antibacterial soap.

**Synthetic Fragrances**
Synthetic fragrances, also known as perfumes, air fresheners and similar products, are designed to make any person or room smell better. The problem is no one knows what is in them and how they work because they are protected by copyright law. While some may be safe, others contain chemicals that cause allergies, reproductive issues or even carcinogens over a long period of time.

What’s the solution? Bring back the unscented soap and detergent and find all-natural ways to create good smells. Some popular methods include combining clove and cinnamon sticks, fresh cut flowers and grass or just opening the window in your home.
Volatile Organic Compounds
This toxin may be harder to avoid than others. Volatile organic compounds or VOCs, are emitted as gases from certain solids or liquids. This includes paint, cleaning supplies, printer ink, carpet, pressed wood, upholstery and much more. When used indoors, VOCs can build up and be up to 10 times higher than outdoors. Some of the health impacts from short-term or long-term exposure can include sneezing, coughing, watery eyes, asthma, lightheadedness and long-term breathing disorders.

What’s the solution? There are now some products that produce low or no VOCs. Some paint brands (ex. Benjamin Moore) no longer contain VOCs. Try using unscented, plant-based detergents and hardwood floors in the home. Last, but not least, opening a window or door and providing good air flow will help keep VOCs from building up.

2018 FOOD PRESERVATION

With spring knocking on our door, the anticipation of Farmers’ Markets and home gardens eagerly awaits us! Until then, I am enjoying the delightful preserved jars from my pantry from 2017, with the taste of local Maryland produce. Eating the bounty from 2017 will also help me make space for what I will preserve in 2018.

The University of Maryland Extension is hoping you will join us in some of the hands-on workshops. The workshops are for novice and experienced canners. There will be a class lecture, followed by participants going into the kitchen to make the canned produce that they will take home that day! Workshops are $20 per person and includes lecture/instruction, and all the equipment to process your own preserved jar.

Workshops start May 1st, and will run through October. These workshops improve participants’ confidence and knowledge in home food preservation.

Find A Workshop Near You.
Baltimore County food preservation registration: https://gieipi2018.eventbrite.com
Harford County food preservation registration https://gieipiharford2018.eventbrite.com
Carroll County and Baltimore City food preservation registration dates are coming.

Source: Shauna Henley PHD, Extension Educator, Family & Consumer Sciences, Baltimore County
Creating Meals Around Meat: How To Fit Meat Into Your Meals Without Blowing Your Budget!

When cooking with ground meat, you can make the meat go further by adding other ingredients like rice or beans. Try these vegetable stuffed peppers and add a small amount of ground meat to the recipe. When making ground beef tacos, mix drained black beans in with the meat and seasonings.

- Replace ground beef with ground turkey
  On the topic of ground meat, ground turkey is usually less expensive than ground beef. It is leaner than beef and your family won’t even notice the difference! Test it out in chili or make turkey meatloaf (for an extra vitamin boost, mix in shredded veggies like zucchini and carrot).

- Make meat an accent ingredient
  Instead of the focus of the meal, use meat to enhance the flavor of a dish. This way you can use less. For example, use thin slices of meat in a veggie-heavy stir-fry or toss small cubes of meat into a pasta sauce or salad.

- Choose a whole chicken or thighs
  When shopping for chicken, chicken thighs are often cheap and on sale. If you buy a large family pack, you can remove any bones or skin and place in smaller freezer bags to make perfect portions to freeze for later. Whole chickens are also a great deal. Roast one at the beginning of the week, remove all the meat from the bones, and shred or dice. Then you have cooked chicken ready for multiple recipes, like this one for Pasta with Greens, Beans, and Chicken.

- Opt for Pork Loin or Boston Butt
  If you are looking to cook some pork, choosing more affordable cuts can help. Pork loin is a leaner cut that remains moist when roasted whole in the oven or cut into pieces and cooked on the stove. Avoid the ones that come pre-seasoned, as they are more expensive and you can easily flavor it yourself with a mixture of your favorite seasonings. Barbeque fans might also suggest the Boston Butt, which actually comes from the shoulder. This piece of pork is fantastic cooked low and slow, perfect for a slow cooker! Add some barbeque sauce and you have easy pulled pork, ready for sandwiches your family will love. Don’t forget the coleslaw!

Source: eatsmartmd.blogspot.com/2018/02/creating-meals-around-meat-how-to-fit.html

Food Advertising to Kids

Food advertising to children is a billion dollar industry. Fast food is the most advertised type of food, followed by cereal, other restaurants and candy. While the number of TV ads for healthy items including water and fruits and vegetables increased over the last 10 years, this category is still only a small portion of all the food ads viewed by children and teens.*
What can you do?

Be aware of marketing efforts to your children. Pay attention to foods that are marketed with prizes, toys, and movie or TV characters. Use food labels to evaluate these foods before you buy. Help your child recognize food advertisements. Point out billboards, commercials, or magazine ads – make it into a game by deciding if they are healthy or not! Reduce screen time. The less time your child spends watching television and playing on the computer, the less likely they are to be exposed to advertisements. Monitor websites, television, magazines, and video games that are directly advertising unhealthy foods to your child. Be positive when you talk to your child about healthy foods. Stay Educated. For more information on marketing food to children, visit the following websites:

http://www.cspinet.org
http://www.fastfoodmarketing.org

Take Action

Help promote healthy foods at your child's school and in your community:

- Get involved in your child’s school wellness council to help make policies that restrict candy, unhealthy snack food and soda on school grounds.
- Use this healthy snack list to plan and purchase food for class parties and celebrations.
- Find a farmer that will work with your school and community to sell fruits and vegetables for a healthy fundraiser.
- Encourage your child’s teacher to avoid using food as a reward in the classroom.

*This information is from a Rudd Center report in 2017.

Source: eatsmartmd.blogspot.com/2018/02/creating-meals-around-meat-how-to-fit.html

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BREAKFAST IS THE MOST IMPORTANT MEAL OF THE DAY!

...but why? Even if you’ve heard this statement your whole life, you may not have stopped to think about it. Or maybe you don’t think it’s true—who has time for breakfast when you’re trying to get your family out the door in the morning? While all meals are important, breakfast is especially important for kids. Children who eat breakfast:

- Have better behavior, concentration, memory, and learning.
- Do better on tests and other classroom tasks.
- Take in more nutrients overall.
- Are less likely to be obese.

Because breakfast is so important to student learning and health, schools work hard to make sure kids get a breakfast every day. In fact, March 5-9, 2018 is National School Breakfast Week! It’s a great time to make sure your child is taking advantage of school breakfast. More and more schools are serving breakfast in the classroom, which means they don’t have to arrive early to eat. Other schools offer grab-and-go breakfasts that students can pick up on the way into class. Find out how breakfast is served in your child’s school. If breakfast is served before the bell in the school cafeteria, make sure your child arrives in time to eat. If breakfast is served in the classroom, just be on time for school! No matter how breakfast is served, encourage your child to eat the fresh fruit that is offered with breakfast—it’s a nutritious, brain-boosting way to start the day!

Source: eatsmartmd.blogspot.com/2018/02/creating-meals-around-meat-how-to-fit.html
What is a whole grain?
Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain is a grain product. Grains are divided into 2 different groups, Whole Grains and Refined Grains. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel, the bran, germ, and endosperm. Examples of whole grains include whole wheat flour, bulgur (cracked wheat), whole wheat pasta, whole grain tortillas, grits, oatmeal, whole cornmeal, and brown rice. Refined grains have gone through a process that removes the bran and germ. This process removes dietary fiber, iron, and many B vitamins. Some examples of refined grain products are white flour, white bread, and white rice.

Is it really whole grain?
To be sure a product is made with whole grains, read the ingredient list. Look for items with the first ingredient listed as 100% whole wheat, whole wheat or whole grain. A product made with whole grains may have a whole grain stamp on the package. The stamp is optional; food companies may not put it on their packaging. Also keep in mind that the stamp may be hard to find on a package.

Make ½ your grains whole!
The Dietary Guidelines recommend that at least 1/2 of the grains that we eat each day be whole grains. Whole grains help our bodies in many ways because of the fiber, vitamins and minerals. These nutrients are important to help reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers. Fiber is important to help food to digest and gives the body a feeling that it is full after eating.

How do you add more whole grains to your meals and snacks?
Make simple changes. Instead of buying white bread or white rice, try 100% whole wheat bread or brown rice. Try our Banana Dog on a whole grain bun. Try new grains. Purchase whole wheat pasta or macaroni. Find a grain that you have never tried before. Whole grains that you may want to try are: bulgur, quinoa, brown or wild rice. Add a Garden Stir-Fry to your weekly meal plan. When the recipe calls for flour, try using at least 1/2 whole wheat flour in the recipe. Give our Bran Muffins a try. Check these and other recipes are eatsmart@umd.edu.

Source: eatsmartmd.blogspot.com/2018/02/creating-meals-around-meat-how-to-fit.html
Grow Your Own Fruits and Vegetables

Did You Know?
- Most of the plants we eat begin with seeds. Inside each seed is a tiny new plant and energy that will be used later to help that plant grow.
- When we eat plant seeds such as beans, corn or nuts, we are also benefiting from the energy that is stored in these seeds.
- Plants can also use energy from the sun to make food that is needed to grow.
- Plants use this food to grow and store extra energy in the leaves, stems, flowers, fruits, and roots.
- When we eat fruits and vegetables, we eat these plant parts that are full of healthy energy. Make sure you are eating lots of fruits and vegetables every day to keep you going.

Take Action!
- Explore the produce section at your local market for new foods to try at mealtime.
- Plant a small container garden with your child using a cardboard box lined with newspaper. Fill it with potting soil and plant lettuce or spinach seeds.

You Don’t Need to be a Farmer To Grow Your Own Produce.
If you don’t have space for an in-ground garden, try a container garden. Recycled containers work great. Remember to poke holes in the bottom for water to drain! Try using one of the items from the list below.
- Yogurt containers
- Strawberry containers
- Reusable grocery bags
- Buckets
Start with one plant. Beans, salad greens, cucumbers, and radishes are easy to grow.

Grow Your Own Beans
Try growing a bean plant with your child using dried beans from the grocery store, such as lima beans. All you will need is a small container, such as a cottage cheese container, a rinsed soup can or margarine dish, with small holes poked in the bottom:
- Fill the dish with soil and place the bean in the soil and lightly water.
- Keep the soil moist and place in a sunny window.
- After 3-4 weeks, you can replant the bean in a larger container with drainage holes in the bottom and place it outside to grow.
- Many bean plants will produce a vine and will need to grow up a fence or trellis.
- Continue to provide plenty of water to your plant and harvest when the plant is full of bean pods.

Visit our blog: www.eatsmartmd.blogspot.com
Turn the Screen Off and Be Active!

Did you know?
The average child spends over four hours a day watching television. Children spend even more time using electronics.

Help your child watch less and move more!
Try to limit screen time. Provide other options. Replace television and other electronic time with a new hobby, playing outside or family time.

- Reward your children with active time together. Go for a walk, play a game, or learn to cook!
- Create “screen-free” bedrooms. Your children will be able to sleep better without a television, computer, or video games in the bedroom.
- Set a good example. When you spend more time being active your children will do the same.

Can’t Go Outside?
When it is raining or too dark outside, you and your child may not be able to play outdoors. Below are some ideas for bringing physical activity indoors.

- Turn on your favorite music and have a dance party!
- Have your child help with chores. Some examples include vacuuming, cleaning their room, and putting away groceries.
- Make time spent watching television more active. See who can do the most sit-ups and push-ups during commercials!
- Clear some space to jump rope!
- Play a game of “Simon Says.”

Take Action! Get Moving Together:

- Try to add an extra 10 minutes of physical activity with your child each day!
- Invite neighbors and friends to join you for a game of tag or kickball.
- Take an extra trip up and down your stairs to get your legs moving.
- Visit the local community center for activities and team games.

Recipe

Ice Cream in a Bag
Servings: 1

Ingredients:
- ½ cup 2% reduced-fat milk
- 2 Tablespoons sugar
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 quart sized freezer bag
- 1 gallon sized freezer bag
- 2 Tablespoons table or rock salt
- ½ cup crushed ice

Directions:
1. Take 1 quart-sized freezer bag.
2. Add 2% reduced-fat milk, sugar and vanilla extract to the quart-sized freezer bag.
3. Seal your quart-sized freezer bag.
4. Take the gallon sized freezer bag and add ice and salt to the freezer bag.
5. Place the quart-sized bag inside a gallon-sized freezer bag.
6. Seal the gallon-sized bag.
7. Shake for 5 minutes or until the milk turns to ice cream and ENJOY!

Visit our blog: www.eatsmartmd.blogspot.com

This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in cooperation with the Maryland Department of Human Resources and the University of Maryland. The University of Maryland Extension will not discriminate against any person because of race, age, sex, color, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry or national origin, marital status, genetic information, political affiliation, and gender identity or expression. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact the Maryland Department of Human Resources at 1-800-332-6347 or apply online at www.marylandassistance.org.
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If you have a disability that requires special assistance for your participation in a program, please contact the Carroll County Extension Office at 410-386-2760; fax 410-876-0132, two (2) weeks prior to the program.

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