

Family picnics, pool parties, road trips and ice cream. Summer is the season of fun! The kids are out of school, the days are longer, and we try to pack every ounce of living we can into three short months. Living large, however, usually means an increase in consumption—of pretty much everything.

Here are some environmentally friendly tips to ensure your summer is filled with good clean fun.

Bottled Water

Water is, by far, the best drink to quench your thirst. But, before you reach for that bottled H₂O, consider the impact to our environment.

Although polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles are recyclable, only 28 percent of them are actually recycled, according to Earth911. Researchers estimate more than 30 billion plastic water bottles end up in U.S. landfills each year. Since it takes 1,000 years for a PET bottle to decompose, our landfills could soon be overflowing with plastic.

In addition to trashing out our landscape, manufacturers use 17 million barrels of crude oil each year to make the plastic bottles consumed in the U.S. alone. That's enough oil to keep a million cars on the road for a whole year.

Recyclable, reusable stainless steel water bottles are a better alternative. Available in all sizes and colors, you can find them in most discount retailers for around \$10.

Insect Repellent

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, DEET and Picardin, synthetic chemicals found in commercial insect repellent, are considered safe for humans. DEET, however, can have adverse side effects including skin rashes, insomnia, mood disorders, impaired cognitive function and, in rare instances, seizures.

Since humans can have a negative reaction to these synthetic chemicals, many scientists believe they impact other living species as well. In August 2009, *BMC Biology* printed a study conducted by university researchers in France who found that DEET negatively impacts the nervous system of mammals and insects, leaving questions about the safety of this chemical

Green Summer Fun

By Laura Hampton



for the rest of the environment including domestic animals, fish and plants.

Luckily, alternatives are available at natural food stores. Burt's Bees' All Natural Herbal Insect Repellent or Jason Natural Products' Quit Bugging Me are just a couple of the available commercially produced alternatives.

If you're feeling really earthy, you can make your own. Essential oils like cinnamon oil, eucalyptus oil, citronella oil, castor oil, orange oil and rose geranium can be mixed with carrier oils or alcohol-based carriers to make insect repellent. Olive oil and sunflower oil are good carrier oils, and witch hazel or vodka can be used as alcohol carriers.

The general makeup for insect repellent is 1 part essential oil to 10 to 20 parts carrier, either oil or alcohol.

Travel

Florida is full of fun destinations for your family vacation, and although it requires gas to get to there, experts say you can do simple things to reduce gas consumption while on your road trip. For example, keeping tire air pressure at the vehicle manufacturer recommended level can reduce fuel consumption by 1 percent and using the air conditioner sparingly can

decrease consumption by 20 percent. Visit gasbuddy.com for additional tips to help conserve precious fossil fuels.

When making hotel reservations, look for Florida Green Lodging facilities. Members of the program have been recognized by the State of Florida for implementing a variety of environmentally friendly practices. For a list of Florida Green Lodging designated hotels visit dep.state.fl.us/greenlodging.



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