



Pamper Yourself—and the Planet— with an Eco-Friendly Routine

by Sally Farhat Kassab

Before slathering or spraying a product on your body, it's worth asking yourself: Do I really need this? Can I find a different product with more natural ingredients and less packaging to recycle? How can I beautify myself without dirtying the planet? Try these 12 simple tips to green your daily routine.

1 USE LESS WATER: We each use about 100 gallons of water a day, and most of it goes right down the drain—flushing detergents, foaming agents, artificial oils, colors and scents into

the ecosystem. An easy way to use less water is to skip a daily shampoo; for most hair types, every other day is fine and for curly hair, once a week is plenty. In-between shampoos, try a dry shampoo or hair powder to reduce the amount of grease. Limit yourself to a three- to seven-minute shower (a kitchen timer can help you keep track), and save both shaving and brushing your teeth for outside the shower.

2 DRY SMARTER: Air-dry your hair or use an eco-friendly blow dryer. "Reduce drying time and conserve energy by drying at the roots only, using a round brush and nozzle," advises Amanda Freeman, founder of *Vital JuiceDaily.com*, an eco-friendly



wellness e-newsletter. “Let the ends air-dry and prevent flyaways by using a [nontoxic] anti-frizz serum.”

3 COLOR SAFER: At home and at the salon, look for ammonia-free hair colors, counsels Stuart Gavert, of Gavert Atelier Salon, in Beverly Hills, who uses non-ammonia color treatments, never lets excess color go down the sink, and recycles the aluminum foils used during highlighting.

4 SKIP AEROSOLS: Hair sprays, shaving creams and deodorants that come in aerosol spray cans contain volatile organic compounds that hurt the environment and can negatively affect health. The vapors can cause diarrhea and earaches in infants, and headaches and depression in mothers, according to a study published in the *Archives of Environmental Health*. Plus, the cans can be difficult to recycle.

5 FINISH WHAT YOU BUY: Most women use only six of the average of 12 products they keep in their vanity, according to an O.B. Tampons survey. Use up the products you have before buying more, and if you aren't going to use one, recycle or reuse the container.

6 DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY: Any beauty products that contain solvents, flammables or petroleum count as hazardous waste, including nail polish remover, nail polish, hair color and aerosol hair spray. Most counties in the United States have regular collections or specific locations to drop off hazardous waste; search the local company online to find lists of what they will accept. Better yet, buy products from companies that don't use toxic chemicals in the first place, to protect your health and that of the planet (*CosmeticsDatabase.com* is a good place to start).

7 RESEARCH THE COMPANY: Check the manufacturer's website—the more forthcoming they are about sourcing and processes, the better. Then, support those that behave in an ecologically and socially responsible manner; some companies even gift a percentage of their profits to environmental organizations.

8 BUY REUSABLE PACKAGING: To reduce packaging, buy shampoos in large bottles that you can pour into reusable smaller ones for ease of handling. If you buy a body wash or lotion from a spa, ask if you can return and get it refilled.

9 LOOK FOR PLANTABLE PACKAGING: Many products come in recyclable boxes, but some companies are now embedding seeds in the box, so you can plant it in your garden afterward.

10 RECYCLE: If you're not sure a package can be recycled, recycle it anyway; it will get sorted at the center. Better yet, collect used cosmetic containers and drop them off for recycling at a U.S. Origins cosmetics retail counter; they accept all brands. For makeup, there is no standard for recycling, but don't put it down the toilet or drain; recycle a plastic blush compact, for example, but put the powder in the trash.

11 SIMPLIFY: Choose products with fewer ingredients, in general, and fewer synthetic ingredients, in particular, says Debra BenAvram, co-founder of *OrganicallyHappy.com*. Look for the Demeter Certified Biodynamic label; it means ingredients were grown using sustainable practices that support balance in the ecosystem.

12 MAKE YOUR OWN: A lot of what comes from a bottle can be made at home, advises esthetician and organic chemist Kimberly Sayer (*KimberlySayer.com*). “For an at-home facial mask, for example, mix one to two tablespoons of clay powder with spring water until you get a smooth paste.” Honey also works well; simply mix it with equal parts milk.

It's empowering to discover that responsible beauty care starts at home. When we know better, we do better.

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