



Your nursing home or assisted living facility relies on many different products to keep things running smoothly-- cleaning products, room furnishings, dishware, office supplies and food. The manufacture and use of these products will ultimately have some impact on the environment and human health.

Buying “green” or Environmentally Preferable Products (EPPs) refers to items that reduce disposal costs, protect health and safety and the environment compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose. There are many ways that EPPs can be incorporated into your facility’s day-to-day operations.

Characteristics of Environmentally Preferable Products:

- Contains high recycled content
- Can be recycled
- Are reusable/contain reusable parts (e.g. rechargeable batteries)
- Has minimal packaging
- Is energy efficient and/or made with renewable energy
- Is less toxic to humans and the environment
- Is multifunctional



Check any state and federal regulations that may apply to your facility before making changes, including but not limited to Connecticut State Public Health, Building and Fire Safety Codes.



Take Action--Buy Smart, Buy Green!

Already done
 In Progress
 Completed

Opt for safer cleaning supplies for areas and surfaces where disinfecting or sanitizing is not required, such as glass /window cleaning, floor stripping, furniture polishing, oven cleaning, offices and public areas. Conventional cleaning products may contain chemicals that lead to short-term irritation and long term health effects.

- Find certified green cleaners at [Green Seal](#), [Ecologo](#) and [EPA's Safer Choice](#).
- [Health Care Without Harm](#) has put together [10 Ways to Find Safer & Greener Cleaners](#) and [Cleaning in Health Care Facilities](#)
- Purchase supplies in bulk, opting for highly concentrated cleaning products that are dispensed through portion control equipment.

Choose green alternatives for paint and other materials. Stick to paints, carpets, and flooring that are low in VOCs and made from recycled materials if possible. This will reduce the amount of air pollution that patients and staff are exposed to and lower your facility's environmental footprint.

Stay away from using products that contain fragrances to mask odors since they likely contain VOCs, such as formaldehyde, benzene, acetate, and ethanol that easily enter the air as a gas. These VOCs can become more concentrated indoors, which can cause adverse health effects such as eye irritation, headaches, nausea, and trouble breathing. Fragrances can come from air fresheners, scented cleaning products, scented skin lotions, hair products, shaving creams and clothes that have been laundered with scented detergents, fabric softeners, or dryer sheets. Purchase products that are fragrance-free. Eliminate the source of the odor by cleaning, disinfecting and removing trash.

Skip disposable products whenever possible. Disposable products tend to be made of [plastic](#), much escaping collection and ending up polluting the ocean. Substitutions like paper for plastic straws or opting for products that can be used multiple times also cut waste. Make use of the [Green Procurement Compilation website](#) and the [Responsible Purchasing Network](#) to find alternatives to disposable products.

Choose products that have minimal packaging. You may need to work with your vendor and/or group purchasing agent to request items that have less packaging. Packaging ends up in your trash, so in the end, this can save you money on disposal costs.



Inventory the office supplies on-hand and compare with facility purchases.

Inventories help to determine what the facility has, what it needs, and what it does not need.

- Avoid purchasing supplies that are in oversupply or not being used;
- Buy recycled, non-toxic options for paper, pencils, pens, etc.

Purchase local foods whenever possible. Getting produce and meats from local vendors lowers the cost and energy needed to safely transport food to your facility, along with the pollution from transport. Check out the CT Dept. of Agriculture’s [Farm-to-Chef Program](#), which can help connect your facility with local farmers and vendors.

Switch to more energy efficient appliances. Washers, dryers, and other appliances have high energy demands and are used frequently, which adds up to a lot of energy consumption. Replace outdated appliances with more efficient alternatives. Consult ENERGY STAR’s [list of energy efficient products](#) and see what works best for your facility.

Next Steps

- Take inventory—Get a team of staff together to take inventories of e.g., food purchases, medical equipment, building materials, and/or cleaning/office supplies. Consider doing these inventories on an annual or biannual basis to ensure that your facility is not being wasteful and that you are using the most eco-friendly products available.
- Start a resupply center —Make use of excess supplies and used materials by gathering them together in one central place. Encourage staff to check this resupply center before making purchases, saving money and avoiding clutter.
- Work with your vendor and/or group purchasing agent to identify environmentally preferable products (i.e., find out [What Health Care Purchasers can do to Reduce Flame Retardants](#)).

Resources

- Several non-profit organizations are working to bring alternatives to the health care sector that protect health and environment and focus on sustainability. Their websites contain numerous reports, sample policies, fact sheets and many other tools and resources. See
 - [Health Care Without Harm](#)
 - [Responsible Purchasing Network](#)
 - [Practice GreenHealth](#)



Want to track your toxics reduction?

CT DEEP can help you with that! Print the form below, fill it out and fax (860-424-4059) or email it to connie.mendolia@ct.gov. We'll help monitor the progress your facility has been making toward reducing toxics.

Building area: _____ ft²

Does your facility have a mixing station for cleaning products? Yes / No

Do you use microfiber mops and cloths to clean your facility? Yes/ No

<u>Cleaning products:</u>	<u>GreenSeal/ECOLOGO certified?</u>	<u>Product Name</u>
Microfiber cloths/mops	Yes / No	_____
Floor cleaner	Yes / No	_____
Glass cleaner	Yes / No	_____
Bathroom cleaner	Yes / No	_____
All-purpose cleaner	Yes / No	_____
Wood furniture polish	Yes / No	_____

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https://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/p2/institution/EPP_checklistFINAL_Sept2018FINAL.pdf