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Earth Day 2011: Out With The Old, In With The New *Take the Chemical Free Pledge*

ATLANTA—Every year on April 22 millions of people across the globe come together to celebrate the Earth's natural environment and resources. While Earth Day—the most widely celebrated environmental event—focuses largely on the outside environment, what about the environment *inside* the home?

Earth Day is the perfect opportunity to jump-start a personal campaign to kick the chemical habit and create a sustainable home. Protecting the environment inside the home is a vital step in preserving the health and wellness of today's families and the environment as a whole.

Marie Stegner, consumer health advocate for Maid Brigade—the only Green Clean Certified® [housecleaning company](#) in the United States—looks at five rooms in the home and provides easy steps to become chemical-free.

- 1. The Kitchen: Swap the sponge for microfiber cleaning cloths.** Sponges are a haven for bacteria and can lead to many illnesses. Instead, switch to reusable microfiber cleaning cloths for all [home cleaning](#) projects. In addition to preventing bacteria and mold growth, the scientific weave of microfiber is so effective that fewer cleaning chemicals are necessary. The cloths also reduce landfill waste and include post-consumer recycled or organically grown materials.
- 2. The Office: Recycle or refill ink cartridges.** Every year more than 300 million toner cartridges are thrown away. That's nearly one million per day! What's more, ink cartridges take nearly 450 years to decompose. Instead of tossing toners into the trash, recycle them. Many companies including [Staples](#) and [Office Depot](#) have recycling programs for all sorts of office waste. A typical print cartridge can be recycled and reused up to six times so it's definitely worth the effort.
- 3. The Bathroom: Dispose of old medications safely.** Avoid flushing old prescription pills down the toilet or throwing them into the trash. Medicine can actually get into surrounding soil and water supplies if this happens, creating an environmental hazard. Instead, contact the local pharmacy, hospital or medical center. Most have programs that take back old medications and dispose of them safely in their bio-hazard containers for incineration.

4. **The Bedroom: Switch to an organic mattress.** In the United States, 20 million mattresses are discarded each year! Even more alarming, the synthetic materials in conventional mattresses are not biodegradable and recycling programs for mattresses aren't readily available. Switching to an organic mattress has the added benefit of reducing the risk of allergies and improving sleep due to the natural, chemical-free materials used in its construction.

5. **The Laundry Room: Go fragrance-free.** The fragrances in detergents and fabric softeners sometimes contain phthalates—chemicals that have been linked to cancer and reproductive-system harm in animal lab tests. Fragrances may also trigger asthma and allergic reactions with symptoms including skin and respiratory irritation, headaches, and watery eyes. Change to one of the many fragrance free laundry products on the market for an easy fix.

Maid Brigade cares about the health of today's families. With more than 25 years of experience, the company is the national leader in green cleaning practices and has a longstanding legacy of offering the latest in [maid services](#) and technologies. Maid Brigade is the first and only Green Clean Certified® cleaning services franchise that implements a certification program for green house cleaning so customers know that they're getting a green cleaning that is safe and truly green. For more information on Maid Brigade or for more cleaning or healthy living tips visit www.maidbrigade.com, www.greenclean certified.com/greentv, or <http://blog.maidbrigade.com>.

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