



## MEET Gerhard

*Gerhard has been an employee at Magna for over 7 years. He currently works at Autosystems America Inc., in Plymouth, Michigan as the Magna Lighting Global Health, Safety, and Environmental Manager.*

**Gerhard is an environmental health leader in his workplace and community, he is an active supporter of the local animal shelter, and he has incorporated many lifestyle changes into his daily routine following a health scare 10 years ago.**

While out of town 10 years ago, Gerhard experienced chest pain. A quick trip to the emergency department revealed he was having a heart attack. While at the hospital, Gerhard underwent a successful life-saving bypass surgery – an event that soon initiated a drastic change to his lifestyle. Following his recovery from the surgery, rather than letting himself feel helpless, Gerhard and his wife decided to initiate a change in what they ate. They researched foods that support heart health and soon decided to eat a mostly plant-based diet, which they continue to follow today. Gerhard knew that changing his diet was only one of the ways he could improve his lifestyle and he wanted to do more, so his efforts did not stop here.

After growing up on a farm in Vineland, a small town in Ontario, Canada, Gerhard knows that being in-tune with the environment can be uplifting and beneficial to his health. Life on a farm helped him develop a passion for environmental preservation. So, to complement his new plant-based diet, he began gardening from early spring to late fall. This provides him with a large amount of fresh fruits and vegetables and provides him with some exercise while tending to the plants. This organic gardening not only helps improve his heart health, but also reduces his spending at the grocery store. Among his nutritious garden, he has added plants that attract butterflies and bees, which all help to pollinate his garden. To further help his garden thrive, Gerhard uses a compost bin

at home, which provides his garden with rich nutrients. This also helps to reduce landfill waste, which is an added bonus for his community. His home garden has helped Gerhard improve his mental health after his health scare by giving him a strong purpose outside of work and he gets additional benefits with healthy foods that he can enjoy at each meal.

Outside of his home, Gerhard has made an environmental impact at his Magna division. He helped plant pollinator gardens outside the building, which helps supply pollen and nectar to ensure that pollinator insects, like bees and butterflies, stay in the area to keep pollinating crops for continued fruit and vegetable production. He plans to add a large vegetable garden there this summer where everything grown will be donated to local food banks. Gerhard acknowledges that this experience will be rewarding for his fellow co-workers, for the community, and it gives him a personal sense of purpose.

Now 10 years after his life-saving bypass surgery, Gerhard has made significant changes to his environment and found a new sense of purpose with his gardening. These changes have led to great improvements in his health status. When asked what piece of advice he would share with others looking to change their environment in a way that would support their health, Gerhard replied,

*“it is helpful to think about what YOU as an individual can do to make a positive impact.”*

Think big, start small, and know that every positive change you make, regardless of how small, can make a larger impact.



### DID YOU *know?*

**Switching your household light bulbs to LED bulbs can save you hundreds of dollars on your energy bills in the long-term!**

LED bulbs consume less energy, use energy more efficiently, provide more light to rooms, and last longer than regular incandescent light bulbs. Consider a switch to LED bulbs today!

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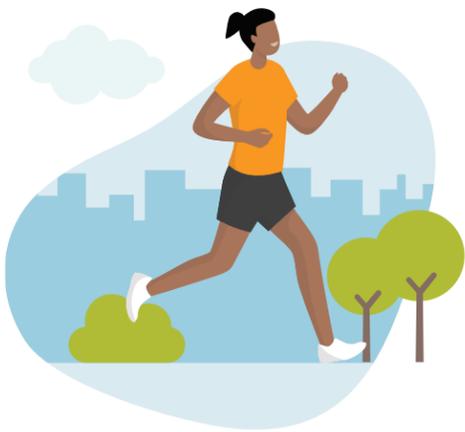
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# What does Environmental Wellness mean for my Health?

**Have you ever noticed that sunny days just feel good? Your energy is higher, mood is better, and you feel more productive and social!**

This is the environment impacting your health. The term environmental wellness refers to how we are affected by our surroundings. Interactions with the environment can affect our well-being in positive or negative ways. Some factors are within our personal control, while others require change among many people. Making sure you are surrounded by people, places, and things that support your well-being can lead to greater personal health and improved community health. Living in an unhealthy environment can lead to stress and negative habit forming that affect both our physical and mental health in harmful ways. This article outlines three areas of environmental wellness that you can focus on to help improve your overall health and well-being.



## WHERE WE LIVE

The first area of environmental wellness to consider is where we live. This can greatly impact our health and affect our safety, comfort, and connection to our surroundings. Getting outside and exploring the local community can help boost emotional well-being and daily life enrichment.

### FOR EXAMPLE

When we find an outdoor space in town that provides new activities to enjoy, we are more likely to spend time there getting active and enjoying the fresh air and sunlight. Even if we are not surrounded by green space, we should take advantage of the sunlight and spend time outdoors, when possible. This can include a visit to the local park, a picnic outing with family and friends, or taking part in outdoor activities such as bicycling or swimming.



## WHAT WE EAT

The second area of environmental wellness to consider is access to nutritious foods in the places where we live and work. In the health promotion community, there is a term called 'food desert' – this is an area where there is limited access to affordable and healthy fresh foods, like fruits and vegetables. People living in a 'food desert' are often forced to choose unhealthy foods from over-priced convenient stores or fast-food restaurants. Food deserts are an example of how access (or limited access) to fresh food can have a direct impact on our health. To combat this problem, many community food banks have implemented 'Mobile Food Markets.' These food trucks deliver healthy fresh local produce options available for purchase to food desert areas at an affordable rate. People in these communities may also consider purchasing items on fast-food menus that contain more vegetables, like salads or wraps! Small changes in our food selection can have big impacts on our health!



## INSIDE OUR HOME

A third area of environmental wellness to consider is inside our home. Bringing environmental wellness inside our homes will help improve overall well-being, especially when we take care of our immediate surroundings.

### FOR EXAMPLE

Making sure our house is tidy and clutter-free can lead to reduced anxiety and better overall productivity. It will also help us to be proud of our home and enjoy the time we spend in it. Another way to make our home spaces more enjoyable is to create stress-free zones within them. Leaving electronics outside of these zones will help us to minimize distraction when we are meant to be resting or focusing on other things. When we constantly check our electronics for messages or updates, we will not be able to focus on the things that matter more in that moment. You can create a stress-free zone by ensuring cell phones, smart watches, and any other devices that may cause you stress are left as far away from the zone as possible. Instead, you can fill this zone with calming tools, such as books and plants. This will help improve sleep quality and stress recovery at night.

By taking care of our environmental wellness, we can make more informed decisions to best support the health of ourselves and our loved ones.

# INDOOR Herb Garden

Growing your own garden can be a year-round activity, despite changes in weather. For example, some plants, like herbs, can be grown indoors in the comfort of your own home, with minimal effort. Herbs are an excellent, low sodium option to add flavour to your food. They enhance food flavours by adding a delicious aroma and can provide many other health benefits, such as:



Source of Vitamin K, which plays a role in strengthening bones.



Source of antioxidants which help protect our cells from damage.



Can be used as a digestive aid and can help ease an upset stomach.



Helps the immune system fight infections due to its antibacterial, antifungal, and antiviral properties.

Many of us buy herbs at the supermarket in either dried or fresh form. Growing them in our own homes can be healthy for both the environment and our mental health. From the mental health side, gardening can help improve mood, increase concentration, and help develop a positive mindset. From the environmental side, an indoor herb garden can reduce the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides

because there is more control over what is going in the soil and how the plant is treated. For example, you may consider using organic soil, which reduces the use of chemical pesticides. If this sounds like something you want to work on, consider growing your own herb garden this year!

## DID YOU KNOW?

Finding multiple uses for household items can help you save money and reduce the negative impact on the environment!

For example, glass food jars can be cleaned and used as pen storage containers on your desk, tea light holders to light up your room, planters for small plants, drinking glasses, and spice containers.



## MENTAL HEALTH CORNER:

### Spring Cleaning

The arrival of spring brings 'spring cleaning,' which is a popular activity where people take the time to deep clean their physical space, such as their home or workspace.

Although spring cleaning results in a tidier environment, it can also help clear our minds and improve the state of our mental health. A cluttered space can feel overwhelming and therefore increase our stress levels. De-cluttering can help reduce anxiety and promote a relaxed state of mind.

#### NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

Try creating a cleaning plan with small tasks to start – remember, this process takes time and effort. Set aside time each week to deep clean one area of your home before moving onto the next. Dividing your effort into small, manageable tasks will ensure you feel less overwhelmed and will lead to feelings of accomplishment.



Once you are done 'spring cleaning,' you should feel less stressed, less overwhelmed, and more in control.

Happy spring cleaning!



# Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Cleaning Products

Do-it-yourself cleaning products are made at-home using simple ingredients. Here are four main reasons why considering a change to DIY cleaning products is worth a little extra effort:



## 1 BETTER FOR YOUR HEALTH

Many store-bought household cleaners contain harmful chemicals that can be toxic for your body. Using DIY household cleaners will reduce your exposure to chemicals and protect the health of your family and pets.



## 3 BETTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The chemicals found in cleaning products may have a negative impact on the environment. When these products are poured down the drain, the chemicals can make their way into our local waterways, which can lead to harmful pollution build-up. By switching to DIY natural household cleaning products, you can help the environment!



## 2 MORE AFFORDABLE

Many DIY household cleaning products can be easily made with items you likely already have in your home. Vinegar, baking soda, lemon juice, and water are just a few ingredients that can create the most effective and affordable cleaning products. For example, you can make glass cleaner, all-purpose cleaner, carpet cleaner, and even toilet bowl cleaner. The average cleaning spray costs between \$4.00-\$5.00. When you make your own cleaners, the costs come down by nearly half! If you consider these savings with all the different sprays you typically use, the money saved will add up!

## 4 EASY TO MAKE AT HOME

All you need to make your own household cleaners are measuring cups and some key ingredients that are likely already in your kitchen. In just two minutes, you can create cleaning products that will last for months! See our recipe below for a homemade DIY cleaner.



**CLEANER RECIPE**  
*Multi-Purpose Surface*

Adapted from [The Spruce](https://www.thespruce.com)

*If you have made the decision to try making a do-it-yourself cleaner, this mixture takes only a minute to prepare, and you can use it on almost any surface in your home. If used on wood furniture or hardwood floors, wipe the wood surfaces completely dry after applying the cleaner.*

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 Large spray bottle
- 1/3 BOTTLE White vinegar
- 2/3 BOTTLE Water
- 3 TO 5 DROPS Essential oils (optional)

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Fill 1/3 of the bottle with white vinegar.
2. Fill the rest of the bottle with water.
3. Add three to five drops of your favourite essential oil to the spray bottle once the vinegar and water have been combined. This will add a nice scent to the cleaner. Some favourite essential oils for cleaning solutions are lemongrass, lavender, pine, peppermint, and eucalyptus.

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### WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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