

Here in California, outdoor activities are enjoyed year-round. Our Bay Area climate allows us to be out walking, hiking, gardening, and working in our beautiful sunny weather almost every day. Being outdoors is healthy for the heart, but can be unhealthy for our skin.

Most of us slather on sunscreen before venturing out. When we swim in lakes, rivers or the ocean some of this sunscreen washes off and pollutes the water. Scientists have discovered that these chemicals are now killing coral reefs.

The residue that we wipe on towels is then washed with that gray water going through our sewer system. That "cleaned" water is then discharged into local waterways. Unfortunately, our sewer plants are not designed to remove most water-soluble chemicals.

There are simple alternatives to reduce some of this sunscreen pollution. One is to cover up with long sleeves, pants, and hats. Lightweight clothing typically has an Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) rating of five. There are now many products that tout a high UPF30 protection.

To sort out what is really effective, I discovered [www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org) and checked out the list of products that have earned The Skin Cancer Foundation Seal of Recommendation. The foundation has more than 800 products on their list and notes "to earn the Seal of Recommendation, a manufacturer must prove that its product sufficiently and safely aids in the prevention of sun-induced damage to the skin."

This list covers the gamut of lotions, clothing, cosmetics, sun glasses, and umbrellas. Several companies have jumped on the band wagon including [www.sunprecautions.com](http://www.sunprecautions.com), [www.coolibar.com](http://www.coolibar.com), [www.sunprotectiveclothing.com](http://www.sunprotectiveclothing.com) and [www.sungrubbies.com](http://www.sungrubbies.com). The Boy Scouts even have a uniform and three hats on their list.

You will find that most of this clothing is quite expensive. There is a more economical solution that you can do at home which has also earned the Skin Cancer Foundation Seal of Recommendation.

My hiking friend, Candace Martin, gave

me a box of SunGuard. Added to your regular wash it adds an invisible shield into clothing that helps block more than 96 percent of the sun's harmful rays from reaching your skin. SunGuard can boost the UPF protection of a white cotton T-shirt from UPF5 to UPF30. The protection should last up to 20 washings. Check out [www.sunguardsunprotection.com](http://www.sunguardsunprotection.com) for more information.

This is a chemical process and, as with the sunscreen dilemma above, there will probably be some residue washed down the drain.

Vallejo is going green!

In order to conserve resources, The Vallejo Chamber of Commerce is now delivering event news, member offers, and other timely information through the Vallejo Business e-Insider. This "e-news" is sent to members in their database and replaces the print edition. Each e-Insider is available to download and print (if need be) in a PDF format.

The Benicia Vallejo Humane Society's recent Barkitecture fund raiser was greener this year. They used real cutlery (instead of the compostable ones) and glassware. Recycling bins and food waste/bioware bins were provided and staffed by the local Sierra Club. When you visit their thrift shop, don't forget to purchase a cloth shopping bag and make all your shopping green.

#### Recycling Safety Tip

My native plant friend, Sue Wickham, passed on this useful information: before you donate, sell or recycle your old cell phone, clear out all the sensitive data. The Federal Trade Commission suggests that you remove the memory card, then reset the phone to its factory settings. Check your manual or call your service provider for more information.

*VALCORE Recycling Board Member Jane Bogner's "A Sorted Affair" is published every other week in the Times-Herald. For recycling information call VALCORE Recycling at 645-8258 or visit [www.VALCORErecycling.org](http://www.VALCORErecycling.org).*

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