

Clothing

The true facts about our apparel

- 55 million pounds of pesticides are sprayed on clothing yearly. Conventional cotton is one of most pesticide-poisoned crops in existence (most likely second only to corn).
- According to UNICEF, there is an estimated 158 million children aged 5 to 14 in child labor worldwide, excluding child domestic labor.
- The process of dyeing fabrics generates the largest proportion of waste water produced by the textile industry.
- According to the U.S. EPA Office of Solid Waste, Americans still throw away more than 68 pounds of clothing and textiles per person per year.
- 80 percent of the energy our clothes consume is used when we wash them. Roughly 26 billion gallons of water are used each day in the U.S., 4.5 billion of which go to operate washing machines.

What damage are we doing to ourselves and the earth?

- The EPA considers 7 of the top 15 of these pesticides used on cotton in the US as “possible,” “likely,” “probable” or “know” to cause cancer in humans.
- According to the EPA, children receive 50% of their lifetime cancer risks in the first two years of life! The EPA warns that chemicals are up to ten times more toxic to children than adults.
- Dyeing alone can account for most of the water used in producing a garment. Then the unfixed dye often washes out of garments, and can end up coloring the rivers, as treatment plants fail to remove them from the water. Dye fixatives also end up in sewers and then rivers.
- Clothing and other textiles represent about 4% of the municipal solid waste stream.
- The manufacturing of nylon emits nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas with a carbon footprint 310 times that of carbon dioxide.

How can I change my habits?

- Do your homework; don't just accept that an item is organic without doing some research.
- Buy clothes with “natural” colors.
- Purchase secondhand.
- If you must have fur, purchase synthetic.
- Support your local designers who source their material locally.
- Look for shoes made from recycled material.
- When you do wash your clothes, wash them in cold water and line-dry in the spring and summer instead of using the dryer.
- Be creative; invent new ways to wear old designs.

What are the benefits in changing my ways?

- The purchase of one T-shirt and one pair of jeans made from 100% organic cotton eliminates at least 150 grams of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides from the environment.
- If everyone chose one pair of pants that were not dyed it would save enough dye to cover the entire city of Chicago with an inch of liquid.
- If just 1 of the 48 average American clothing purchases were purchased secondhand, the energy equivalent of more than half a gallon of gasoline could be saved, because of all the energy used to manufacture and transport new clothes.
- If just 10% of the real fur garments sold in the US each year were replaced by an alternative nonfur garment, an average of 5 million gallons of oil and 5 million animals could be saved.
- If every American household purchased just one pair of shoes made from recycled material, the savings could total more than two hundred million lbs of waste abstracted from our landfills.
- Washing clothes in cold water can cut CO₂ emissions by 100 pounds and save you up to \$64 per year on your energy bill.
- Line-drying your clothes will keep 700 pounds of carbon dioxide from making their way into the environment.