



10 Minutes For The Planet

Depollute your Home©

by *Valentine Rinner*

Hi everyone, and welcome to "Ten minutes for the Planet". Today we're going to speak about an issue that silently harms your life, your families' lives and the planet, when it could in fact be easily improved.

If you remember, a few weeks ago, we talked about outdoor air pollution and how it is a serious hazard for all of us. However, we only spend, on average, between 10 and 30% of our time outdoors. The rest of it is *indoors*. So, if we only talk about outdoors we are missing the biggest part of the picture.

Indeed, indoor air pollution levels are usually more than twice as high as those outdoors! Based on a 2014 study, it is estimated that indoor pollution in France kills over 20,000 people every year. And the study only looked at 6 pollutants - pretty scary!

Indoor pollution sources are different to those outdoors and as an individual you have more control over them. Some of the sources are air conditioning or heating systems, indoor equipment, cleaning agents, and activities such as cooking or smoking. All of these load the air with humidity, and toxic and volatile substances. So firstly, make a habit of checking that your appliances are not clogged up or in need of maintenance as this increases energy consumption and can increase humidity in your home, which in turn encourages the proliferation of bacteria.

Another important source of indoor pollution is, surprisingly, cleaning agents. Most of the mainstream products meant to clean our houses ironically contain pretty harmful volatile substances that are released into the air and stay in our homes as we inhale them day after day. Alternatives here are really cheap and easy to use. The "60 million de consommateurs" magazine published a thorough guide on natural cleaning in 2016, but you can also find good websites or guides that explain how to replace toxic products with effective harmless alternatives. Basically, white vinegar, black soap, sodium bicarbonate and lemon can replace the vast majority of items in your cleaning cupboard for a really low price and with efficient results.

If you are doing some big or even small construction work in your home, be careful with the products you choose or that are used by your contractor. Some well-known harmful materials are lead paints, and asbestos which was extensively used in construction before it got banned twenty years ago. But there are still some widely-used products such as chemical paints or glues that are in fact seriously harmful. It is however possible

to find good alternatives or easily make them yourself if you just do a bit of research on what best suits your needs.

Reducing the source is one thing, evacuating the rest is another. Airing your home is the best way to purify the air that's inside. And it's also better for your heating bill as it gets the humidity out and dry air is way easier to heat than humid air, and feels warmer too. But there are a few rules first. You need to create a rush of air with multiple open windows for 5 to 10 minutes. Making a tiny opening in a window for an hour will only result in letting the warmth out. Also, levels of outdoor pollution vary widely during the day so it's best to air before 11 am or after 10pm.

That'll be it for today and I hope it's enough to convince you to add those easy habits to your resolutions!

So bye everyone! And see you next week for a new episode of Ten minutes for the Planet.