If you're like most busy women easy clothing maintenance is very important to you. If you're like me you have two large piles of clothes in your room marked "dry cleaning" and "ironing" that you never seem to do anything with except add to them, you may need to start thinking more about maintenance. Don’t get me wrong there was a time in life when how to maintain a garment was the last thing on my mind when I purchased it. Color, fit, price - all of those things were more important to me.

Until I became a mother, that is. Finding time to iron or hand wash, or lugging a pile of clothes to the dry cleaners in one arm while holding a little one in the other - it "got old" very fast. When I found myself awake in the wee hours ironing some of MY DAUGHTER’s high-maintenance clothes, it occurred to me that there had to be a better way.

There is: it's called "fiber blends." If you don't know a lot about fibers, here’s a quick cheat sheet:

Natural fibers like cotton, wool, and silk are comfortable to wear because they absorb body moisture, vent body heat, and are less prone to static electricity. While they generally clean easily, they are also prone to shrinking and wrinkling and usually require extra maintenance like hand washing, air drying, and ironing.

Man-made fibers like acrylic, nylon, and polyester wrinkle less and tend to hold their shape better than natural fibers, and they can usually be machine washed and dried without too much additional care (be sure to check the care label). But synthetic fibers don't absorb body moisture well, they tend to trap body heat instead of venting it (which is why, not to get too personal, you should wear cotton underwear), and they're more prone to static and pilling than natural fibers.

So what's a gal to do to get the body-friendly features of the natural fibers with the easy care of the synthetics? I'll say it again: "fiber blends."
You'll need at least 35% of a fiber to see a difference in performance, and 50% to get the most of the fiber's good qualities (except for stretch fabrics like Lycra and Spandex, where less than 10% can make a big difference). So if you find a shirt you like that's 50% cotton and 50% polyester, for example, you'll enjoy equal parts absorbency and easy care. What if it's 65% cotton and 35% polyester? More absorbency but more wrinkles. How about 65% polyester and 35% cotton? Less wrinkles but less absorbency. See how this works? So when should you think about how to maintain a garment?

**BEFORE** you buy it - preferably before you head to the dressing room to try it on. Take a quick look at the fiber content and the care label. If you see that you're going to have to hand wash, iron, or dry clean the garment and you're willing to make the commitment or take on the additional expense, then go try it on and see how it looks.

But if spending a little quality time with your ironing board or dry cleaner offers about as much appeal as taking all of your children (or grandchildren) to the grocery store with you, put the garment back on the rack and back away slowly. There's no sense even trying it on. Because if you fall in love with it, you'll kid yourself about the maintenance, buy it, take it home, wear it once or twice, and then put it into one of your special care piles for who-knows-how-long. So don't fool yourself.

"All marriages are happy," wrote playwright Raymond Hull. "It's the living together afterward that causes all the trouble."

So it is with clothing care. Don't fall in love with a garment and take it home without a second thought to its care. Go into the purchase with your eyes wide open, particularly if you're dropping a bundle. If it's going to require a lot of effort or money to upkeep and you're not up to the challenge, don't buy it. Don't even try it on. Put it back on the rack and find something that DOES work with your lifestyle. It will be money better spent. (Information from: fashionforrealwomen.com)

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**Food Safety Tips for a Safe and Healthy Summer**

Practicing proper food handling techniques will protect you, your family and friends from food-borne illness and food contamination. Here are some tips to keep in mind when preparing, storing and cooking food as you celebrate this summer.

**Wash Hands, Utensils, and Food Preparation Surfaces**

- Food safety begins with hand-washing even in outdoor settings. And it can be as simple as using a water jug, some soap, and paper towels.
- Consider using moist disposable towelettes for cleaning your hands.
- Keep all utensils and platters clean when preparing food.

**Preparing Fruits and Vegetables**

- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten, under running tap water before packing them. Packaged fruits and vegetables labeled "ready-to-eat," "washed," or "triple washed" need not be washed.
- Rub firm-skin fruits and vegetables under running tap water or scrub
with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water.

**Safe Grilling Tips**

- Marinate foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter or outdoors. If some of the marinade is to be used as a sauce on the cooked food, reserve a portion separately before adding the raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Don't reuse marinade.

- Don't use the same platter and utensils that previously held raw meat or seafood to serve cooked meats and seafood.

- If you partially cook food in the microwave, oven, or stove to reduce grilling time, do so immediately before the food goes on the hot grill.

- When it's time to cook the food, cook it thoroughly. Use a food thermometer to be sure the food has reached an adequate internal temperature before serving.
  
  - Beef, veal, and lamb steaks and roasts--145°F for medium rare, 160°F for medium, and 170°F for well done.
  
  - Ground pork and ground beef--160°F.
  
  - Ground poultry--165°F.
  
  - Poultry breasts--170°F.
  
  - Whole poultry (take measurement in the thigh)--180°F.
  
  - Fin fish--145°F or until the flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork.
  
  - Shrimp, lobster, and crabs--the meat should be pearly and opaque.
  
  - Clams, oysters, and mussels--until the shells are open.

- Grilled food can be kept hot until served by moving it to the side of the grill rack, just away from the coals where it can overcook.

**Serving Food Safely**

- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.

- Do not use a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood for anything else unless the plate has first been washed in hot, soapy water.

- Hot food should be kept hot, at or above 140 °F. Wrap well and place in an insulated container.

- Foods like chicken salad and desserts in individual serving dishes can also be placed directly on ice, or in a shallow container set in a deep pan filled with ice. Drain off water as ice melts and replace ice frequently.

- Don't let perishable food sit out longer than 2 hours.

- Food should not sit out for more than 1 hour in temperatures above 90°F.
Ice cream
Every year homemade ice cream causes several outbreaks of *Salmonella* infection. But you can still enjoy homemade ice cream without the risk of *Salmonella* infection by substituting a pasteurized egg product, egg substitute, or pasteurized shell eggs for the raw eggs in your favorite recipe.

Other options for safe homemade ice cream are to use a cooked egg base or prepare it without eggs. Even when using pasteurized products, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture advise consumers to start with a cooked base for increased safety, especially if serving people at high risk.

Finally, ensure that the dairy ingredients you use in homemade ice cream, such as milk and cream, are pasteurized.

A Note About Transporting Food

- Keep cold food cold. Place cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs. Cold food should be held at or below 40°F.

- Consider packing beverages in one cooler and perishable foods in another.

- Meat, poultry, and seafood may be packed while it is still frozen so that it stays colder longer. Be sure to keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood securely wrapped so their juices don't contaminate cooked foods or foods eaten raw such as fruits and vegetables.

- After washing fruits and vegetables dry them with a clean cloth towel or paper towel before packing them.

- Keep the cooler in the air-conditioned passenger compartment of your car, rather than in a hot trunk. Limit the times the cooler is opened.

If you have questions, please contact your local Extension office.

10 Tips for Better Gas Mileage

With summer comes high gas prices, it's worth using these 10 simple steps to improve your gas mileage.

1- Don't use premium fuel if your car does not require it (check your owner's manual); using it is an unnecessary expense.

2- Check your tires on a regular basis and keep them properly inflated. If they are under-inflated, it can shorten the life of your tires as well as reduce your mileage (up to 4 percent for every 5 pounds of under-inflation). Be careful not to over-inflate your tires, either; you will get premature and uneven tire wear and have to replace them much sooner.

3- Do you ever stop for more than 60 seconds while your engine is idling? If so, turn it off. It takes more fuel to idle longer than a minute than for you to start your car. The US Department of Energy estimates that for 145 million passenger vehicles idling five minutes per day, approximately four million gallons of gasoline are consumed without going anywhere. Also avoid excessive warm-up time. Modern engines don't require it.

4- Keep your speed at 55 miles per hour or less whenever possible. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, a vehicle loses about one percent in fuel economy for every one mile per hour above 55 m.p.h. that it is driven. Traveling at 65 mph (105kph) instead of 55 mph (88
Get Moving: How to Get Your Family More Active

Summer is here at last, and especially for kids, it seems, the break means the chance to spend unlimited hours parked on the couch watching TV.

But channel-surfing hardly qualifies as a workout. And when you pair that lack of physical activity with the junk food that typically accompanies the "couch potato" lifestyle, the combination can be dangerous.

Recent years have seen an alarming rise in numbers of obese adults and children. In fact, more than 60 percent of adults and 20 percent of children are now considered overweight, which can lead, in turn, to such conditions as heart disease and diabetes.

A new educational program called Families Eating Smart and Moving More aims to help families learn how to take control by eating more healthfully at home and being more active throughout the day. The program, which features a Families Eating Smart and Moving More Web site, is a joint project of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, the North Carolina Division of Public Health and the North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians.

"We want getting 30 minutes of physical activity for adults and 60 minutes of physical activity for kids to be built into everyone's daily routine," says Jimmy Newkirk, physical activity coordinator with the North Carolina Division of Public Health. "It should be as routine as brushing your teeth."

If 60 minutes, or even 30, sounds overwhelming, you should know that when...
it comes to exercise, everything counts, whether you're taking the stairs instead of the elevator or dancing to a favorite song on the radio.

Here are some tips aimed at helping you and your family boost your activity levels:

Be a good media role model. Plan and limit your kids' and your own TV time, and remove TVs from kids' bedrooms. Turn off the TV during meals. Make it fun. Hold a jump roping contest, wash the car together, go for a walk around the block and talk to the neighbors … it can all be fun.

Try something new. Summer especially is a great time to try out a new sport or activity – it's never too late (or too early) to try your hand at tennis, give yoga a go or sharpen up swimming skills.

"We know what we should be doing," says Carolyn Dunn, nutrition specialist with North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service. "We're hoping that Families Eating Smart and Moving More will inspire families to think more about the choices they make when it comes to both choosing to eat healthfully and choosing to exercise more."

(Source: familyinfo.info)

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"Preparing for Emergencies"

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service is a provider of research-based, educational materials to help individuals, families, communities and businesses. Each year, millions of people are affected by natural disasters and their consequences. Being prepared for a disaster is the best way to minimize losses and recovery time. In response to high demand for information on disaster readiness, response and recovery, The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service has published a 50 page guide with tips on preparing for hurricanes and flooding, as well as ice and snow storms. The guide includes information on everything from creating a disaster plan to caring for pets to preparing food safely without electricity. The guide is a compilation of information from Extension agents across the state. In addition to the guide, information on disaster preparedness can be found online at the NC Cooperative Extension website at http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/disaster/. This site contains the same information found in the guide and has been produced to offer assistance in dealing with natural disasters.

If you would like a printed copy of the guide contact your local North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service county center.

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Spotlight for June /July 2006

**2006 SUMMER AVENUES OF INTEREST**

A summer program for all youth ages 5-19 (youth must be 5 on or before January 1, 2006) will be offered by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, Onslow County. The 4-H motto is “To Make the Best Better” and you can make the best better by enrolling now to learn something new and meet new people. We invite you to join us for an exciting summer!!!

**Who may enroll:** Any youth in Onslow County may enroll in one or more workshops. You do not have to be a 4-H'er. The programs are open to youth 5-19 except where age restrictions are noted.

**Registration:** To register, come by the 4-H office at 4024 Richlands Hwy, or call us at 455-5873. You can also check our website (http://onslow.ces.ncsu.edu/) to see if classes are full.
All programs have registration fees which must be paid when you register. Registration will not be held at the workshop or activity.

Call 455-5873 or come by the 4-H office today to pick up a brochure.

Onslow County Farmer's Market
Grand Opening June 24th

The Onslow County Farmer's Market, will celebrate its first season in its permanent structure on Saturday, June 24th with a Grand Opening Celebration. The Market will be open from 9:00am to 3:00pm with festivities for the entire family. Located at the Onslow County Multipurpose Complex, the market will feature farm and craft vendors and is open to the public. The Market is currently open every Tuesday and Saturday from 9 am to 3 pm through November for the 2006 season.

The Grand Opening Market Celebration on June 24th will feature a ribbon cutting by the Jacksonville-Onslow Chamber of Commerce, live music, clowns, face painting, balloons, and fresh food and drinks. Home grown produce, and food stuffs from Onslow County will provide a comprehensive rural shopping experience. Available products range from ice cream, hot coffee and fresh baked bread to fruits, vegetables, herbs, and plants. Vendors will include: Apple Blossom Farms (eggs), Bennett Farms (produce), Bostic Farms (produce), L&W Gardens (flowers) Riggs Farm (produce), Sanders Farm (produce), Sunset Meadow Farms (herbs).

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