Low-flow showerheads can nearly halve water usage and lower power bills – an impressive savings at a time when drought conditions are limiting water and energy costs are rising. A typical five-minute shower with a non-conserving showerhead can use up to 40 gallons of water; a low-flow head would use about 28 gallons for that same shower, and an ultra-low-flow head would require only 7.5 gallons.

Many low-flow showerheads are inexpensive, easy to install, and designed to maintain pressure so that it seems as if more water is being used per shower. Similarly, low-flow sink faucets are available to further reduce water usage.

Simply installing a high-efficiency (low-flow) showerhead and faucets could save the average household up to 7,800 gallons of water per year. And, because 73 percent of the water used for showering is hot water, replacing a non-conserving showerheads and faucets with low-flow models will reduce the amount of power needed to heat the water, thus reducing a household's power bill. High-efficiency showerheads can cost as little as $8-$50, but can reduce water usage by 25 percent to 60 percent. Low-flow faucets can cost as little as $5-$10 apiece.

The two main types of low-flow showerheads and faucets are aerating (adds air to the water stream to maintain steady pressure and keep the spray full) or non-aerating (adds pulses to the water stream to deliver a strong spray). Aerating showerheads either draw the air into the water stream or inject compressed air. There can be significant differences in spray quality from model to model, even with the same flow rate. Check with a resource such as Consumer Reports for specific information on how different models function.

Showerheads manufactured after 1992 are required to use less water than their predecessors (a maximum of 2.5 gallons per minute). If your showerhead was manufactured before 1992, consider replacing it with a higher efficiency model. Use this easy test to see if a new showerhead could save you water, energy and money:
1. Place a bucket (marked in gallons) under your shower head.

2. Turn on the shower at the normal water pressure you use.

3. Time how many seconds it takes to fill the bucket to the 1-gallon (3.8 liter) mark. If it takes less than 20 seconds to reach the 1-gallon mark, you could benefit from a low-flow shower head.

The U.S. Department of Energy also offers a cost calculator to help determine water usage: [http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/procurement/eepptools_showerheads_calc.html](http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/procurement/eepptools_showerheads_calc.html)

The calculator factors in expected usage, power and water costs and flow rates.

Consider replacing kitchen and bathroom faucets with low-flow models to further reduce water usage. Similar to low-flow showerheads, these are also inexpensive and easy to install. When purchasing a high-efficiency showerhead or faucet, look for a flow rate of 2.75 gallons per minute or less. When replacing a non-conserving fixture, take the old showerhead or faucet with you to the store to make sure that the new fixture is compatible.

For a relatively small investment of time, money and effort, the average household with non-conserving showerheads and faucets could significantly reduce its water use and energy bills. For more information on water-wise fixtures or energy conservation tips for your home, contact Peggie Garner at Onslow County's Center of North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

Additional resources
[http://www.fypower.org/res/tools/products_results.html?id=100160](http://www.fypower.org/res/tools/products_results.html?id=100160) and/or

---

**Public Awareness of Energy Star Surges, Helps to Fight Climate Change**

(Washington, D.C. - April 10, 2008)

Public awareness of the Energy Star label has grown to more than 70 percent in 2008, an increase of about 20 percentage points over the last five years, according to a recent report. In many major markets where local utilities and other organizations use Energy Star to promote energy efficiency to their customers, public awareness of Energy Star is even higher, averaging nearly 80 percent.

“Consumer awareness and understanding of Energy Star continues to increase,” said Bob Meyers, principal deputy assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Air & Radiation. “Greater awareness empowers Americans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by selecting more energy efficient products at home and at work.”

The report, titled “National Awareness of Energy Star for 2007” presents an analysis of a survey commissioned by the Consortium for Energy Efficiency, a non-profit organization that promotes the manufacture and purchase of energy-efficient products and services. This is the eighth year that the survey has been conducted.

Additional results from the survey show that:

More than 70 percent of households reported being favorably influenced by the Energy Star label, up from about 50 percent in 2003.

80 percent of these households reported they are likely to recommend Energy Star products to their friends, with 29 percent of households reporting they are “extremely likely” to recommend Energy Star.
Energy Star was introduced by EPA in 1992 as a voluntary, market-based partnership to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency. Today, the Energy Star label can be found on more than 50 different kinds of products as well as new homes. Products that have earned the Energy Star designation prevent greenhouse gas emissions by meeting strict energy-efficiency specifications set by the government. In 2007 alone, Americans, with the help of Energy Star, saved more than $16 billion on their utility bills while reducing the greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those of 27 million vehicles.

For more information or a copy of the report, visit: http://www.energystar.gov/news

---

**Add a Little Spice (and Herbs) to Your Life**

Spices and herbs have been used in foods for centuries. Archeologists estimate that by 50,000 B.C. primitive man had discovered that parts of certain aromatic plants help make food taste better, according to the American Spice Trade Association (ASTA). Spices were once so costly only the wealthy could afford them. In 11th Century Europe, many towns paid their taxes and rents in pepper. The reason for Columbus’ voyages in 1492 was to seek a more direct passage to the rich spices of the Orient. So what's the difference between a spice and an herb? Here are definitions of various seasonings from Ann A. Hertzler of Virginia Cooperative Extension.

- **Herbs** are leaves of low-growing shrubs. Examples are parsley, chives, marjoram, thyme, basil, caraway, dill oregano, rosemary, savory, sage and celery leaves. These can be used fresh or dried.

- **Spices** come from the bark (cinnamon), root (ginger, onion, garlic), buds (clove, saffron), seeds (yellow mustard, poppy, sesame), berry (black pepper) or the fruit (allspice, paprika) of tropical plants and trees.

- **Seasoning blends** are mixtures of spices and herbs.

---

**Fat, Sugar and Salt Reduction Tips**

Spices and herbs can help retain flavor in your foods while cutting back on dietary fat, sugar and sodium/salt.

**Reducing Fat.** Removing a tablespoon of fat removes about 10 grams of fat and 100 calories. The calories in herbs and spices are far less than in breading, batters, gravies, sauces and fried foods.

**Reducing Sugar.** Reduce or eliminate sugar by using these sweet-tasting spices:

- *Allspice*
- *Cloves*
- *Anise*
- *Ginger*
- *Cardamom*
- *Mace*
- *Cinnamon*
- *Nutmeg*

**Reducing Salt.** Here are some tips when using spices and herbs to help you reduce the salt in foods.

- Savory flavors and flavors with “bite,” such as black pepper, garlic powder, curry powder, cumin, dill seeds, basil, ginger, coriander and onion, are the most effective in replacing the taste of salt.
Omit the salt when cooking pasta and flavor with basil, oregano, parsley and pepper or use an Italian seasoning blend.

Use powdered garlic and onion rather than their salt form. Use half as much of the powdered form.

Check labels to see if “salt” or “sodium” are listed among the ingredients.

---

**Celebrate the 4th of July . . . Safely**

Fireworks and celebrations go together, especially during the Fourth of July. But fireworks can be dangerous, causing serious burn and eye injuries. According to the National Council on Fireworks Safety over 8,000 people are injured each year by fireworks. Their mission is to educate the public on the safe and responsible use of consumer fireworks so as to eliminate injuries.

If you decide to set off fireworks on your own, be sure to follow these important safety tips:

- Use fireworks outdoors only.
- Read and follow all warnings and instructions.
- Never allow children to play with or ignite fireworks, including “sparklers”. Sparklers, can reach a temperature of over 1,000°F, they cause half of the fireworks related injuries overall.
- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.

Spectators should keep a safe distance between them and the shooter. The shooter should wear safety glasses and non flammable gloves.

- Only light fireworks on a smooth, flat surface away from the house, dry leaves and flammable materials.
- Never try to relight a “dud” (fireworks that have not fully functioned), wait five minutes to approach the “dud”, then soak it in a bucket of water before discarding.
- Always have a water hose handy in case of accidental ignition.
- Only use fireworks as intended, do not try to alter them or combine them.
- Alcohol and fireworks do not mix. Have a “designated shooter”.
Recently Generations United and the Toy Industry Association, Inc. joined to study the benefits of older adults playing with young children and the project yielded some very interesting results. Excitement and laughter filled the room as the children and older adults played hide and seek even though some of the adults in the study couldn't physically run or hide. What was happening? The players had spontaneously re-invented this classic game: The “grandparent” counted to ten while the children hid, and then verbalized all the places they were “searching” for the children until finally the children popped out of their hiding places, squealing with delight.

Play is the great equalizer, as this real-life example demonstrates. Every child instinctively knows how to play and adults of all ages should still play too, especially since the benefits of intergenerational play are great. The purpose of this article is to increase understanding about the benefits of play for people of all ages and illustrate how play and toys can successfully be used to enhance intergenerational relationships.

Play enables individuals to learn about themselves and the world, stimulates mind and body, builds bonds, fosters greater imagination and supports all stages of development. What comes to mind when you hear the word play? Certainly children, because “play is children's work.” However, play benefits all ages, from children to older adults and is essential to well being. Extensive reviews of research demonstrate that play promotes cognitive development, language, motor abilities and social maturity. Additionally, play allows children to express and explore feelings, thoughts and experiences. Even businesses can experience remarkable breakthroughs from play, which helps establish a safe environment for introducing new ideas, generating dialogue, challenging assumptions and building a sense of common purpose.

The chart below demonstrates the many similarities in the benefits of play for young children and older adults:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Young Children</th>
<th>Older Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>*Increase flexibility in thinking (imagination; symbolic representation)</td>
<td>*Exercise flexibility in thinking (imagination, creativity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Make new connections of meaning</td>
<td>*Make new connections of meaning (critical thinking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Gain concrete experience with visual/spatial; &amp; mathematical relationships</td>
<td>*Recognize surprises; alter ideas habits (expectations are challenged)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Solve problems</td>
<td>*Solve problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>*Express ideas and negotiate with peers (language development)</td>
<td>*Express ideas and articulate convincing arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Learn what is acceptable language and behavior</td>
<td>*Share perspectives based on life experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Learn to share, compromise, respond to others</td>
<td>*Learn to adapt and change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Make friends</td>
<td>*Make new friends &amp; keep the old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Physical

- Practice and consolidate motor skills
- Oxygenate & stimulate blood flow to the brain
- Gain concrete experience with relationships of weight, size, distance, etc.
- Increase control over tools and materials

### Emotional

- Interact with others and learn to express feelings appropriately
- Work through emotionally charged experiences
- Experiment with new roles for self
- Learn to show empathy
- Build self-esteem

Relationships via play is associated with better mental health, less disease and disability and increased survival. During play, intergenerational-shared site facilities observe positive change in mood and higher engagement even among frail elders.

Robin Taylor  
Extension Agent  
Family & Consumer Science

---

Children and adults who play together discover a world beyond themselves and learn respect for each individual's knowledge, strengths and values. Both learning from and enjoying each other as they play. Research shows that children who play with adults demonstrate greater creativity and higher levels of language and problem solving skills than when playing solely with other children. Additionally, infant and toddler play is more sophisticated with adult partners. Engaging with adults supports optimal cognitive and social-emotional development in young children. For older adults, play has psychological and health benefits, reducing stress, promoting relaxation and giving perspective to the demands of life. Building and maintaining

---

Peggie L. Garner  
Onslow County Extension Director

### SPOTLIGHT of The Month

**“Co-Located Pet Shelter”**  
(by: Melissa Evans)

Hurricane season has just began on June 1. The best way to protect your family from the effects of a disaster is to have a disaster plan. If you are a pet owner, that plan must include your pet—their lives depend on you. The Onslow County Animal Response Team (CART) will set up a co-located pet shelter with the American Red Cross shelter at Jacksonville Commons Middle School in the event of a disaster this year. Only individuals who have checked into stay at the emergency shelter themselves will be allowed to bring pets. Pets will be housed in an area separate from humans, but owners are expected to provide care for their own pets.

**The following items must be brought with your pet to the emergency shelter.**

- Kennel/cage  
- Food for 72 hours & bowls  
- Medications  
- Vaccination records  
- Leash & Collar with UD tag. Remember, whenever you go take pets with you! The depend on you for their safety!