

Greening the Physician Office

Most health care sector greenhouse gas emissions are attributed to hospitals and other large facilities, but medical offices can reduce their environmental impact. Resources like [My Green Doctor](#) provide guidance to physicians and staff on how to reduce their carbon footprint and curb climate change. This document focuses on actions that smaller medical practices can take to make a big improvement to the environmental sustainability of their practice to benefit patients and the planet.

Transportation

Help commuters reduce emissions: Encourage use of mass transit, establish vanpool/carpool programs to make employee commutes more efficient, and consider telework, when possible, for employees. Provide lockers, showers, and bike parking for employees who bike or walk to work. When selecting an office space, consider proximity to public transit routes.

Energy Efficiency

Reduce your office's energy use by switching to energy efficient LED bulbs and adjust thermostats to save energy when appropriate (up a few degrees in the summer, down a few degrees in the winter). Maintain and clean your heating and air conditioning system to ensure it is operating at peak efficiency. Optimize the building envelope with better insulation and energy-efficient windows.

Install On-Site Renewable Energy Capability: Facilities can install (or encourage their office building to install) solar panels to generate a portion of facility's energy, and/or solar hot-water heating system.

Purchase Green Power: Use power generated from renewable sources like wind and solar.

Reduce Standby Energy Use: Plug computers and other electronic equipment into power strips and turn them off when not in use. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, plugged-in electrical equipment may consume energy even when it's powered down (i). Standby power (or "phantom" loads) can consume up to 5 percent of an electrical plug load.

Purchase Energy-Efficient Products: Buy Energy Star (ii) or Federal Energy Management Program-designated products.

Request an energy audit for your office: Your utility provider may be able to perform an energy audit to help you set your energy efficiency goals.

Seek out office buildings that are LEED certified or have a high Energy Star score: Such certification can help to ensure that your office building is making efficient use of resources and keeping greenhouse gas emissions down. More information on Energy Star buildings can be found here: <https://www.energystar.gov/buildings/benchmark>

Information on LEED certified buildings can be found here: <https://www.usgbc.org/leed>

Waste

Recycle all recyclable products, including electronics: Reduce, reuse, and recycle office and other products whenever possible. Procurement staff should purchase items that are made of recycled materials. Consult the [EPA Comprehensive Procurement Guideline Program](#) for additional information.

Replace bottled drinking water with a water cooler or filtered tap water: Globally, about 20,000 plastic bottles are made each second, polluting the air and clogging landfills (iii). Waste can be reduced by using water coolers, reusable drinking containers, and filtered tap water.

Use cloth instead of disposable paper for linens and gowns: Ensure that your laundry service provider practices in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Resources:

My Green Doctor <http://www.mygreendoctor.org/>

Energy Star: Energy Use in Medical Offices https://www.energystar.gov/sites/default/files/tools/DataTrends_MOB_20150129.pdf

Environmental Protection Agency—Center for Corporate Climate Leadership <https://www.epa.gov/climateleadership>

- i U.S Department of Energy. Energy Saver: 3 Easy Tips to Reduce Your Standby Power Loads. Available from: <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/articles/3-easy-tips-reduce-your-standby-power-loads>
- ii Energystar. Healthcare: An Overview of energy Use and Energy Efficiency Opportunities. Available from <https://www.energystar.gov/ia/partners/publications/pubdocs/Healthcare.pdf>
- iii Laville S and Taylor M. A million bottles a minute: world's plastic binge 'as dangerous as climate change.' The Guardian. June 28, 2017. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jun/28/a-million-a-minute-worlds-plastic-bottle-binge-as-dangerous-as-climate-change>