

5 Steps Toward Going 'Zero Waste' in the Bathroom

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The bathroom is one of the easiest rooms in the house to cut back on waste, although you might be surprised to hear that. With a few adjustments to your shopping habits, you may not even need a garbage can in the bathroom anymore, nor will you produce vast quantities of empty plastic containers destined for the recycling bin.

While embarking on my own zero waste quest, I've gathered tips from experts such as Bea Johnson and Shawn Williamson (you can read more about them in my post about [going zero waste in the kitchen](#)), and through experimentation on my own. Here are the most significant changes one can make in the bathroom:

1. Minimize the plastic

Choose a single multipurpose soap for the whole family to use, instead of buying individual body washes and shampoos for each member. My family uses Dr. Bronner's Pure Castile Peppermint Soap for everything, as well as bars of non-packaged natural soap that I buy loose at the health food store.

Avoid all plastic, pump-action bottles of hand soap, which are ridiculously wasteful. Many of them are [antibacterial and contain triclosan](#), a chemical that the American and Canadian Medical Associations urge people to avoid.

Check out [Life Without Plastic](#) for plastic-free alternatives, such as hemp shower curtains, wooden toilet brushes, aluminum soap boxes, and wooden bath thermometers.

2. Refill and buy in bulk whenever possible

If you live in a city, there are many excellent natural food stores and co-ops that offer liquid refills. You can keep using the same container for Dr. Bronner's Pure Castile soap, various natural shampoos and conditioners, body washes, and household cleaners.

Buy toilet paper (always made from 100% recycled, unbleached) from an office supply store such as Staples. It comes in a huge cardboard box, with each roll individually wrapped in paper, instead of non-recyclable plastic.

3. Make body care products and cosmetics from scratch

Consider trying the [“no shampoo” method](#), which uses only a cardboard box of baking soda and a glass jug of apple cider vinegar, and is mixed in a glass jar for application – the ultimate zero waste alternative to shampoo.

You can also make your own deodorant (see a [great recipe here](#)) and keep it in a reusable glass jar.

Make tooth powder, a toothpaste alternative, from scratch. Bea Johnson's [recipe](#) uses baking soda and stevia powder.

Facial exfoliants, moisturizing or clarifying masks, and cleansers are all surprisingly easy to whip up using household ingredients like oatmeal, honey, almond meal, yogurt, black pepper, and avocados.

Rather than buying expensive lotions, seek out glass jars of organic, cold-pressed oils (such as coconut, avocado, sweet almond, grapeseed, etc.) to moisturize, to wash your face (read about the [Oil Cleansing Method](#) here), and to remove makeup.

4. Support green companies that value closed-loop production

It is always better to opt for glass or metal over plastic packaging, and there are some great cosmetics and body care companies that are catching on to the importance of avoiding plastic.

[Farm to Girl](#) is a new company that sells fair-trade, organic moisturizers and lip balms that come in glass and metal packaging. They will soon be ready to receive used containers for refill or return, either by mail or in store.

[Kari Gran](#) sells handmade, cold-pressed oils for facial cleansing in dark glass bottles. Its toner has a spray top, which means no wasted cotton balls for application.

Lush sells [solid shampoo](#) and exfoliating bars that come package-free.

Aveda sells a refillable lip color case, [available online](#).

[AfterGlow Cosmetics](#) and [Red Apple Lipstick](#) both carry natural, gluten-free, and mostly organic eye color palettes that are refillable. You can order refills online.

5. Ban all disposables, single-use products, or items with a limited life span

Q-tips, cotton balls, cotton pads, sanitary pads, and tampons are either unnecessary or have better, reusable counterparts. Wash your ears in the shower with a finger; use a washcloth to remove makeup; invest in a Diva cup or reusable cotton pads.

There's a whole world of toothbrush alternatives. You can order compostable wooden or bamboo toothbrushes with [boar-hair](#) or [BPA-free polymer](#) bristles. Other companies sell toothbrushes made from 100% recycled plastic and offer recycling services for their plastic brushes.
