

## **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A HEALTH-CONSCIOUS ENVIRONMENTALIST**

**By**

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The day started off badly. I awoke from a fitful sleep about 7.00a.m. and noted with annoyance that my bedroom window was tightly closed. This meant that, all night long, I had been inhaling unnecessarily high concentrations of radon, the naturally occurring radioactive gas of which Cork has more than its fair share.

Grim-faced I arose, washed, dressed and went downstairs for breakfast. Naturally I eat 'healthy' food and breakfast consisted of pure orange juice, high fibre cereal and some toast on which I put a low-fat spread. As I ate, I read the information printed on the low-fat spread container and on the cereal box. The low-fat spread puzzled me. The spread has substantial body to it, despite the fact that, according to the information on the box, it is composed of little or nothing. The cereal box proudly and brashly proclaimed that an average serving of its contents contains the same amount of fibre as 15 potatoes. For some reason I found this information more unsettling than reassuring.

After breakfast I drove to work. I always feel guilty about driving the car. It burns up precious oil resources and the exhaust gases are polluting. I should really use my bicycle but work is six miles away and it is all up hill on the way home. I am too soft. As I sit into the car a guilty secret flashes into my mind. The car is old and I never had it converted to run on lead-free petrol. I hope nobody knows this.

It was a lovely sunny day, without a cloud in the sky. This cheered me up for a few minutes until I remembered the depleted ozone layer high up in our atmosphere. This means that dangerous ultraviolet light from the sun is inadequately filtered out. Dangerous sunlight is pouring through the car's sun-roof onto the top of my head, parts of which are not as generously covered as they once were. I incline my head at an unnatural angle in order to avoid the sunlight. Drivers of oncoming cars note my pose with quickened interest.

Into the office, where I first of all sit down to work on my personal computer. I like to get such work done first thing in the morning when I am fresh, as I find it tiring to work on this machine at arms length distance later in the day. It is necessary to work at this distance from the machine in order to minimise the risk of exposure to magnetic emissions.

Midmorning coffee break poses a dilemma. I have two jars of coffee in my office, one is decaffeinated and the other is not. I have seen reports which claim that caffeine is not good for you and, as a result, I normally drink decaffeinated coffee. The ordinary coffee is kept, like a bottle of whiskey, for special occasions. However, that morning I heard a report on the radio to the effect that decaffeinated coffee was actually worse for your health than ordinary coffee. I decided to skip coffee altogether, and, instead, drank a glass of milk. I hoped the milk didn't come from a mad cow.

Lunch time arrived and off I went to the staff restaurant. The menu offered two choices, fish and pizza. The fish looked very appetising but, naturally, I had to check on its origin. I asked the woman who was serving if she knew where the fish was caught? She said she didn't but added that several customers had commented on how nice the fish tasted. I asked if she could specifically rule out an Irish Sea origin for the fish. She replied that for all she knew the fish

might have been caught in the Dead Sea. I started to explain about radioactivity in the Irish Sea but had to cut it short when some colleagues in the queue behind me began to direct unnecessarily abusive language in my direction. I settled for a salad sandwich and a bottle of mineral water (the 'light' variety).

That evening, after a high fibre and low cholesterol tea, I sat down in my living room to relax and read the newspaper. After about half an hour we all agreed that there was a 'nip' in the air and my wife said that she would switch on the oil central heating. I suggested that we should postpone using the central heating until the weather became bitterly cold later in the year. I pointed out that oil was a scarce resource which should be conserved, that burning it contributed to the greenhouse effect and that we should compensate for the 'nip' in the air by wearing extra clothes. My wife retorted sharply that normal people remove rather than don their overcoats on entering a house. I appealed to the children who could see no merit in my argument except that it was very funny. On went the central heating. I sank into my armchair and guiltily brooded over a question that frequently pops into my mind - how had I built a house and not put even a single solar panel on it?

I switched on the television looking for some light entertainment. I only have two channels. Channel one was showing the news and channel two a documentary on the destruction of the tropical rainforests. No joy here. My eye wandered around the living room - teak skirting board, teak architrave and teak door. My God, how many scarce hardwood trees were destroyed in order to put wood into my house?

I decided to relax with a couple of beers before going to bed, so out came the six-pack. I was almost finished my second bottle but didn't feel any cheerier. What sort of beer is this anyway? I peered closely at the label - alcohol-free!

Time for bed. Up the stairs, cleaned the teeth, into the pyjamas and into bed, forgetting to crack the window open. As Buddha sagely pointed out a long time ago - 'life is difficult'.

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