



Going Green

C F L Light Bulbs, (continued from
January Mustard Seed)

How to Use Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs Safely

- ◆ Always switch off and allow a working CFL bulb to cool before handling.
- ◆ Always handle CFL bulbs carefully to avoid breakage.
 - If possible, screw/unscrew the CFL by holding the plastic or ceramic base, not the glass tubing.
 - Gently screw in the CFL until snug. Do not over-tighten.
 - Never forcefully twist the glass tubing.
- ◆ Do not install CFL's in table lamps and floor lamps that can be easily knocked over, in unprotected light fixtures, or in lamps that are incompatible with the spiral or folded shape of many CFL's.
- ◆ Do not use CFL bulbs in locations where they can easily be broken, such as play spaces.
- ◆ Use CFL bulbs that have a glass or plastic cover over the spiral or folded glass tube, if available. These types of bulbs look more like incandescent bulbs and may be more durable if dropped.
- ◆ Consider using a drop cloth (e.g., plastic sheet or beach towel) when changing a fluorescent light bulb in case a breakage should occur.

What if You Drop a C F L Bulb and it Breaks?

The tiny amount of mercury you're exposed to when breaking a CFL Bulb is extremely unlikely to cause any ill effects, noticeable or otherwise. But how do you minimize even this tiny amount of risk? Remove children and pets from the room, and then clean up the broken bulb as quickly as possible. First, increase the ventilation in the room where the bulb broke by opening windows and doors. Then use index cards or other stiff paper to pick up the broken pieces of glass and any visible mercury. Don't use your bare hands, and don't use a vacuum cleaner because this can disperse the mercury more widely. Once you've gotten up the big pieces, use something sticky like duct tape to get up smaller pieces and dust. Place pieces in a secure plastic bag and recycle it.. To be extra safe, stay out of the area for a few hours to let any remaining mercury disperse.

Remember - even if some broken CFL bulbs end up in a landfill, using CFL's should still cause a net decrease in mercury in the environment. Why? Because they so dramatically reduce energy use, and coal-generated electricity releases much more mercury than a CFL bulb ever could!.

Submitted by Ruth Mehl