

By Cynthia Matossian, MD, FACS



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How going green can help save more than money

To go completely paperless, take a close look at your break room.

***Editor's note:** Recognized as one of America's top ophthalmologists by the Consumer Research Bureau, Cynthia Matossian, MD, FACS, founder of Matossian Eye Associates, has 27 years management experience and is skilled in community outreach and practice expansion. With this monthly column, she shares the secrets to her success in growing Matossian Eye Associates from a one-office practice with two employees to an integrated practice with three offices and more than 50 employees.*

In an era of growing costs associated with managing trash, no step toward reducing waste is too small. Depending on the size of your office, waste management could be costing you more

than you think. Look at our practice for example. With a large staff, we were taking out more than two trash cans full of break-room refuse every day. If the plight of the environment doesn't move you, the cost to regularly replace disposable plates, cups and cutlery should.

We decided to start becoming part of the solution by reexamining our use of break-room supplies, paper and energy.

SAVINGS IN THE KITCHEN

First, we installed energy-efficient dishwashers in our multiple locations and purchased a set of ceramic dishes and stainless steel flatware for each. We also purchased ceramic mugs for coffee to replace hot liquid Styrofoam cups, and tall plastic cups for water. From that point on, we banished all paper dining products.

BACK TO THE OLD GRIND

Next, we de-installed our one-cup coffee machine. The small containers they use are costly, 40 to 90 cents per. Plus, using these with a staff of up to 30 individuals meant a trash can full of little plastic pods. If 30

people have two cups of individual-pod coffee a day, each in a foam cup, that's 300 cups and 300 pods a week — and that's just in one of our three offices.

We reconverted back to the drip-brew coffee with an insulated carafe and committed to using only brown, recycled-paper coffee filters.

Purchasing coffee grounds in large cans is much more affordable, too. Now, that same 300 cups weekly can go into mugs every day, and we use only 25 thin sheets of post-consumer filter paper.

CLEARING IT WITH STAFF

Since our staff is relatively young, environmental friendliness really appealed to them.

Any new effort means asking your staff for extra input. We have a rotating schedule designating someone to load and start the dishwasher each night before locking the doors and someone else scheduled to unload it each morning before the office opens. A good way to get staff on board with an added responsibility is to ask them to share their ideas and for you to consider their input. **OM**

