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# Down to Humus

A publication of Congregation of the Humility of Mary

"The word 'humble' comes from 'humus' derived from the Latin meaning earth or ground. Humus is matter essential for fertility of the soil. It is integral to the cycle of life; plants need it for growth…Thus it is appropriate that in our mission statement, we commit ourselves to care for the earth itself." -Bernadine Pieper, CHM. Taken from The Humility Woman Booklet, page 3.

June/July 2025

## Stay cool, save money and conserve energy this summer

*As summer temperatures climb and utility bills follow, staying cool without breaking the bank—or the planet—requires a thoughtful approach. Fortunately, there are many practical strategies to reduce heat indoors, save money and conserve energy all at once. Whether you're a homeowner, renter or apartment dweller, here are simple yet effective ways to beat the heat.*

### 1. Make Your Home a Fortress Against Heat

The first line of defense against summer heat is keeping it from entering your home in the first place.

*Use Curtains and Blinds:* Close blinds and curtains during the hottest part of the day, especially on south- and west-facing windows. Blackout curtains or reflective shades can block up to 80% of sunlight and significantly reduce indoor temperatures.

*Seal Gaps and Insulate:* Tiny leaks around windows and doors can let in hot air. Seal these gaps with weather stripping or caulk. Adding insulation to attics and walls helps keep cool air inside, reducing the strain on your air conditioner.

*Install Window Film:* Reflective window film is inexpensive and can reduce solar heat gain, keeping rooms cooler and protecting furniture from UV damage.

### 2. Maximize the Efficiency of Your Cooling System

Your air conditioner can be both a comfort and a cost burden. Optimize its use with a few simple practices:




*Set Thermostat Smartly:* The U.S. Department of Energy recommends setting your thermostat to 78°F (26°C) when you're home and higher when you're away. Each degree above 72°F can save you up to 3% on cooling costs.

*Use Ceiling Fans Wisely:* Ceiling fans can make a room feel up to 4°F cooler, allowing you to raise your thermostat without sacrificing comfort. Just remember to turn fans off when you leave the room—they cool people, not air.

*Clean Filters and Coils:* A dirty air filter or condenser coil can make your system work harder, driving up energy use. Clean or replace filters monthly during heavy use and have your unit professionally serviced annually.

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*Use a Programmable or Smart Thermostat:* These devices allow you to automate temperature settings based on your schedule, avoiding unnecessary cooling when no one is home.

### 3. Adopt Low-Tech Cooling Solutions

Sometimes the old-fashioned tricks work best, especially when trying to save energy.

*Cross-Ventilation:* Open windows strategically to create a cross-breeze. Place a fan near a window to draw cooler evening air in and open a window on the opposite side of your home to push warm air out.

*Cool Yourself First:* Instead of cooling the whole house, focus on your personal comfort. Drink cold water, wear light, breathable clothing and use cooling towels or a spray bottle with chilled water.

*Unplug Heat-Producing Devices:* Electronics, lights and appliances generate heat. Unplug devices when not in use and switch to LED lighting, which emits far less heat than incandescent bulbs.

*Use the Grill or Microwave:* Cooking with an oven or stovetop heats up your kitchen quickly. Keep meals simple or take them outdoors to the grill to avoid adding unnecessary warmth indoors.

### 4. Make Strategic Use of Outdoor Shade

Your landscaping choices can also impact your indoor comfort and cooling costs.

*Plant Trees or Shrubs:* Shade trees, especially on the west and south sides of your home, can block direct sunlight and reduce cooling needs. Vines on trellises or pergolas can provide natural shading for patios and windows.

*Install Awnings or Shade Sails:* Exterior shading devices block sunlight before it reaches your windows, reducing indoor heat gain significantly.

### 5. Take Advantage of Off-Peak Hours

Utility rates can vary based on the time of day. Running your dishwasher, laundry machines or other high-energy appliances during off-peak hours (typically early morning or late evening) can save money.

*Pre-cool Your Home:* If you live in an area with time-of-use pricing, cool your home early in the day and allow the temperature to drift up during peak hours.

*Run Appliances Efficiently:* Wash full loads in cold water, use the air-dry setting on your dishwasher and avoid the clothes dryer when possible—line-drying saves both energy and heat buildup indoors.

*Keeping cool in the summer doesn't have to mean sky-high electric bills or excessive energy use. With a mix of low-cost habits, efficient appliances and thoughtful home improvements, you can stay comfortable, protect your wallet and reduce your environmental impact.*

Beat the summer heat with this refreshing, easy-to-make Watermelon Mint Cooler—perfectly hydrating, naturally sweet and bursting with flavor!



# Watermelon Mint Cooler

## Ingredients

4 cups seedless watermelon, cubed and chilled
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice (about ½ a lime)
6–8 fresh mint leaves
1 teaspoon honey or agave syrup (optional)
1 cup cold water or sparkling water
Ice cubes

## Instructions

In a blender, combine watermelon, lime juice, mint leaves, and honey (if using).
Blend until smooth.
Strain through a fine mesh sieve for a smoother drink (optional).
Stir in cold water or sparkling water.
Serve over ice with extra mint leaves or a lime wedge for garnish.

Tips:
Freeze the watermelon cubes ahead of time for an extra cold slushie version.
Add a splash of coconut water for extra hydration