



SPOTLIGHT ON...

WILLAMETTE EAR, NOSE, AND THROAT AND FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY

AT A GLANCE

Willamette Ear, Nose, Throat and Facial Plastic Surgery
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Willamette ENT and Facial Plastic Surgery was the first EarthWISE certified business in Marion County in 2007. They recertified in 2009 and 2011.

HERE'S HOW THEY'VE EARNED THEIR GREEN STATUS:

Recycling: By working with Garten Services, they've started a whole new recycling program for medical plastics.

Water: The facility has low-flow shower heads and toilets, but they are also protecting nearby creeks and rivers with a porous asphalt sidewalk and parking lot.

Renewable energy: Solar panels offset a huge portion of the facility's energy use and solar water heaters heat the water.

Paper reduction: By switching to electronic medical records and electronic signatures, the office has reduced paper by 20 percent or more.



Willamette Ear, Nose and Throat and Facial Plastic Surgery (WENT&FPS) has been leading the field of environmentally friendly medical offices since its beginning in 2001.

The office building and surgery center off River Road South was designed and built with low-flow toilets and showerheads, and the two staff kitchens were stocked with reusable dishware.

Since then, however, the medical facility has gone so much further to be designated a green facility. Indeed, the practices inside WENT&FPS have truly revolutionized medical waste recycling.

Consider this: Many of the supplies for surgery come individually wrapped in plastic. Gowns, masks, gloves and patient covers are used and discarded as often as dozens of times a day. Add medication bottles and disposable hard plastics to the laundry list of items that are trashed in a medical facility.

It's no wonder that garbage needed to be picked up twice a week at WENT&FPS and that it was overloaded. Voluminous amounts of plastics are pervasive in the medical field.

Linda Nishioka, director of facial plastic surgery, couldn't stand to see so many plastics and other items trashed when they seemed to be recyclable. By working with Garten Services, a nonprofit that offers many recycling services, she was able to introduce most of their medical plastic waste into the regular recycling bin.



The biggest barrier to the program? The mindset that medical waste is "contaminated."

Doctors, nurses and other staff have been trained to throw out all items used with a patient. But a "contaminated" item is only one that has bodily fluid or tissue on it—a relatively infrequent occurrence for WENT&FPS procedures. Yet clean gowns, booties, hairnets and surgical supply packaging were overflowing the garbage.

Garten Services' employees were trained extensively on how to handle the specific medical waste.

Then WENT&FPS staff members were trained about which items fit in the biohazard, trash and recyclable containers. Huge posterboards with examples attached to the panels in the surgery center serve as regular reminders. Plus, nudges of encouragement

by Linda all lead to a program that's successful.

"To ask staff to put it in the right bin on a busy day is a challenge," she said, smiling.

The reason it worked?

"Our surgery center was behind this," Nishioka said. "We have staff who will



Linda Nishioki with the medical facility's 2012 Green Award