This is how I manage my IDL path. Try it if you like.

1. Remove the path setting from all of your IDL .pro files (procedures and functions).

2. Assuming that you keep all your IDL .pro files in subdirectories under $HOME/idl, then create a file named idl_startup.pro in $HOME/idl containing this line

!path = !path + ':' + expand_path('+$HOME/idl')

3. In your $HOME/.cshrc file, add this line (remove any existing IDL_STARTUP or IDL_PATH settings)

setenv IDL_STARTUP $HOME/idl/idl_startup.pro

4. Log out and then log back in to cleanly execute the .cshrc file.

That's it. You may also want to switch to the convention of using square brackets for referencing arrays, e.g.,

b = a[0]

instead of

b = a(0).

It makes life much easier.

Cheers,
Liam.
Practical IDL Programming
http://www.gumley.com/

PS #1: You should also have a careful read of the sections titled "Managing IDL Paths" and "Automatic Compilation and Execution" in the IDL online help (type idlhelp).

PS #2: You don't need to restart IDL every time you run a program.