

Healthy Homes

Most of us spend at least half of our lives inside our homes without realizing there is a connection between our housing and our health.

Our homes can make us feel safe, but they can also make us sick. Some homes may have health hazards including lead-based paint, mold, rodents and insects hiding in clutter, secondhand smoke, and pesticides. Other health hazards are invisible and can be deadly such as carbon monoxide and radon.



For Bedrooms, Living Rooms, and Family Rooms

Here are some ways you can make your bedrooms, living room, and family room healthier:

- Install smoke alarms on every floor and near all bedrooms, test these smoke alarms monthly and change the batteries every year.
- Install carbon monoxide alarms near bedrooms.
- Do not smoke or allow anyone else to smoke in the home.
- Clean up clutter so insects and rodents don't have a place to burrow.
- Keep your floor clear of electrical cords and other clutter such as shoes, toys, and clothing.

If your home was built before 1978:

- Have your home tested for lead paint.
- Fix peeling or chipping paint using lead-safe work practices.
- Use safe work practices when painting, remodeling, and renovating to prevent spreading lead dust.

For Kitchens

There are also ways to ensure your kitchen is healthy:

- Never use the stove or oven to heat the house.
- Use a range hood fan or other kitchen exhaust fan. Ideally it will vent outside; fans that do not vent outside keep poisons and moisture in the house.
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm.
- Never leave food unattended on the stove.
- Avoid wearing clothes with long, loose-fitting sleeves when cooking.
- Use safe cleaning and pest-control products (keep them locked away from children, follow label directions, and dispose of these products safely).



For Bathrooms

To keep your bathrooms safe:

- Keep all medications away from children by locking them in a medicine cabinet and using childproof caps.
- Clean up moisture and mold safely.
- Open windows and doors to get fresh air.
- Use a bathroom exhaust fan that is vented outside; a fan that is not vented outside keeps moisture in the house.
- Install grab bars on the wall of the bathtub and shower and next to the toilet if anyone in the house has mobility challenges.

For Basement, Crawl Space, Utility, and Laundry Areas

Remember to safety-proof your basement, utility, and laundry room as well. Steps you can take to keep these areas safe include:

- Set the water heater at 120 F to prevent burns.
- Change the furnace/AC filter regularly.
- Have gas appliances and furnaces checked yearly by a professional to make sure they do not release carbon monoxide (CO).
- Vent the clothes dryer to the outside.
- Test for radon (if a high level is detected, hire a specialist to eliminate the hazard).
- Lock up products used for cleaning, car maintenance, gardening, and pest control

Cleaning tips for a healthier home

- Dust your home monthly.
- Organize your medicine cabinet.
- Get rid of any old and no longer used items that could be "toxic" including cleaning products, paint cans, thinners, oils, solvents, and stains. Do not throw these items into the regular trash. These should be disposed of properly so contact your local sanitation department to find out where the hazardous waste drop-off center is located.
- Vacuum floors regularly.
- Make sure batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are changed regularly and working.
- Keep the kids safe by ensuring outdoor playground equipment such as swing sets and slides are in good shape, and sturdy.



Resource: www.onhealth.com