



Tips for Keeping Your Home Healthy

Mold & Mildew - Mold is alive and grows on damp or wet surfaces. It produces tiny spores that float in the air. When you breathe them into your lungs, they may cause an allergic reaction, or may trigger an asthma attack. To avoid mold, keep surfaces clean and dry. Store clothes and towels clean and dry, and don't let them stay wet in the laundry basket or washing machine. Don't leave water in air conditioners, drip pans, or basements. Cover windows well if they leak. Run a fan vented to the outside, or open a window while showering. Wipe down shower walls with a towel after showers or baths.

Safe Drinking Water – Public drinking water in the United States is safe for most healthy people, but there are things you can do to help protect the water supply for you and your family. If you haven't used the water for several hours, let the cold water run for a few minutes to flush out water sitting in pipes that may have collected lead or other metals. Don't throw chemicals in the trash or pour them down the drain - read the labels for disposal instructions. Don't leave pet waste on the ground where rain can wash the germs into rivers and lakes - flush it down the toilet instead.

Smoke Alarm - Install smoke alarms on each floor, and near every sleeping area. Change batteries annually.

Carbon Monoxide Alarm - Carbon monoxide is an invisible gas that can come from appliances that burn gas, oil, coal, or wood, and are not working properly. It is colorless, tasteless, and odorless. Provide good ventilation for all heating appliances, and do not block the appliance's air openings. You should have at least one carbon monoxide alarm in your home.

Tobacco Smoke and Second Hand Smoke - Tobacco smoking can cause lung cancer, heart disease, and other serious health problems. Second hand smoke can trigger asthma attacks, and cause other respiratory problems. Don't smoke in your home, or let anyone else smoke in your home. Don't smoke in your car because the smoke can linger there and other passengers will breathe it in.

Hazardous Household Products – Always read the label and follow the directions on household products. Never mix two products together unless you are certain it is safe. Keep products out of reach of children and animals, and buy products in childproof containers. Keep products in their original containers. Keep containers dry and tightly closed. Keep containers away from heat. Recycle any products that can be recycled, like oil, antifreeze, etc. Never burn or dump leftover products or containers. Find out about your community's hazardous waste collection points. Keep the Poison Control Center phone number (800-222-1222) in a convenient location, like on your refrigerator, or by your phone.

Good Indoor Air Quality - Most people spend half their lives inside their homes. Improve air quality in your home by having good ventilation. Open windows occasionally to let in fresh air, decrease moisture build-up that aides mold growth, and get rid of air pollutants.

Pests - Pests are bothersome, and can cause allergies, trigger asthma, and cause other health issues. To help avoid pests, keep your home clean and dry, and keep clutter down. Store food in tightly sealed containers. Empty your garbage often. Don't leave pet food or water out overnight. Clean up left-over food and spills right away. Wash dirty dishes after eating. Seal cracks where bugs hide, or get into your home.

Lead - Lead-based paint was banned in 1978, but some older homes may still have lead paint or lead pipes. You can ingest it, or breathe it in from the air, and it is poisonous. It can cause learning, behavior, and growth problems in children that last a lifetime. It may be in cracking, chipping, or flaking paint, or old water pipes

could be made with lead. If people in your home work with lead, make sure they shower and change clothes and shoes before coming inside so they don't bring it into the house. If you haven't used the water for several hours, let the cold water run for a few minutes to flush out water sitting in pipes that may have collected lead or other metals. Don't use hot water from the tap for drinking, cooking, or making formula, because it can take more lead out of the pipes. Don't let your children play in soil that may have lead in it. A blood test is the only way to know if your child is being exposed to lead. You can ask your doctor to test your child. If you need to have your home or water tested, your local or state health department can tell you how.