

FOR MORE INFORMATION

New York State Department of Health

Phone: ☐ 1-800-458-1158

E-mail: ☐ ceheduc@health.state.ny.us

Mail: ☐ Center for Environmental Health
547 River Street
Troy, NY 12180

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Phone: ☐ 1-518-402-8788

E-mail: ☐ pestmgt@gw.dec.state.ny.us

Mail: ☐ Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-7254

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Phone: ☐ 1-800-438-4318

E-mail: ☐ eaqinfo@aol.com

Mail: ☐ Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue
N.W. Washington, DC 20460

New York State Energy Research and Development Authority

Phone: ☐ 1-866-NYSERDA

E-mail: ☐ info@nyserdera.org

Mail: ☐ NYS Energy Research and Development ☐ ☐
☐ Authority
17 Columbia Circle
Albany, NY 12203-6399

REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES:

THE SEVEN BEST KID-FRIENDLY PRACTICES



State of New York • George E. Pataki, Governor
Department of Health • Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner

Dear Parent/Caregiver:

The purpose of this brochure is to increase your awareness about exposure to chemicals around you. Some exposures may be more obvious than others. Scientists continue to study the relationship between childhood illness or disability and environmental chemicals. In the meantime, applying good habits around the home or school makes good sense. The more you can reduce unnecessary exposures to commonly used chemicals or other hazardous substances, the healthier the environment becomes for you and your children.

Providing a Healthy environment for our children is a goal we all share. Children are at greater risk from chemicals found in food, water, dirt and air for several reasons:

- ❖ They're more at risk because, for
- their size, they eat, drink and
- breathe more than grown-ups
- ❖ They're more at risk because they
- crawl on floors, play in dirt and put
- their hands in their mouths
- ❖ They may be more at risk because
- their bodies are still developing

NOTE:

Numbers that appear as footnotes throughout this brochure indicate that a reference to more information is given on the last page!

REFERENCES

- 1 Indoor Air Pollutants
Call NYS Department of Health at (800) 458-1158
- 2 Cleaning up Mercury Spills
Call NYS Department of Health at (800) 458-1158
- 3 Burning Trash
<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/environ/trash.htm>
- 4 Ventilation
<http://www.nyserda.org/guide.pdf>
- 5 IPM/Pest Management
<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/locator/shm.html#brochures>
- 6 Tick and Insect Repellents
<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/westnile/guides/tickrepellent.htm>
- 7 Chemicals in Sportfish and Game
<http://www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/outdoors/fish/fish.htm>
- 8 Food and Drug Administration Pesticide Reports
<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/pesrpts.html>
- 9 Get Ahead of Lead!
Call NYS Department of Health at (800) 458-1158
- 10 Healthy Lawn and Environment
<http://www.epa.gov/oppfead1/Publications/lawncare.pdf>
- 11 Protect Children from Poisonings
http://www.epa.gov/oppfead1/cb/10_tips/
- 12 Reducing Pesticide Exposure
<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/pest/reduce.htm>
- 13 Home Safe Home
<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/environ/safehome.pdf>
- 14 Indoor Air Quality
<http://www.nyserda.org/iaq.pdf>
- 15 Protect Your Family From Radon
<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/radon/radonrx.htm>
- 16 Carbon Monoxide
<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/indoor/co.htm>
- 17 Space Heaters
<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/heaters/heater.htm>
- 18 Molds
<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/moldresources.html>
- 19 Lead-based Paint
<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/lead/leadbroc.htm>
- 20 Pressure treated wood
http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/chemicals/cca_ga.htm
<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dshml/sldwaste/cca.htm>

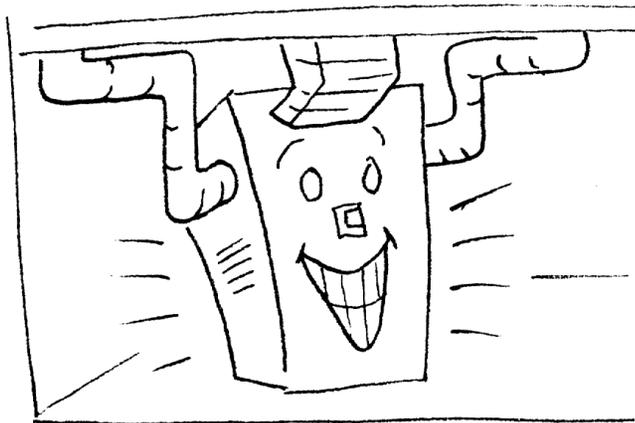
7 HOME SAFE HOME (cont.)

Indoor fuel oil storage tanks

Make sure fuel oil is properly delivered, and does not leak on the floor. Spills should be cleaned up completely.

Playground equipment, decks and furniture made with pressure-treated (chemically treated) wood

Seal pressure-treated wood regularly to reduce skin contact with the chemicals. Oil-based, penetrating stains appear to work best for this purpose, or use several coats of paint. When possible, choose playground equipment made from plastic (preferably recycled), metal or untreated natural wood.²⁰



1 KEEP IT OUT



The best way to reduce exposure to chemicals is to keep them out of your surroundings. Here are some examples¹:

The exposure can come from...

What can I do?

Secondhand smoke

Go outside if you have to smoke and encourage other smokers to do so too.

Contaminants tracked in from outside such as lawn pesticides, lead dust from exterior paint, etc.

Use a doormat, remove shoes at the door, plant shrubs and grass to keep dust levels down.

Chemical drift from nearby pesticide applications

Close windows during treatment and then open them about 30 minutes later for fresh air. Cover children's play toys and equipment prior to applications if possible, or hose down exposed items before re-use.

Gasoline and kerosene fumes from lawnmowers, snowblowers and other power equipment

Store equipment in outside shed or garage and use proper storage containers.

Release of mercury from broken thermometers

Clean up spills properly² (never vacuum a spill); replace mercury thermometers with digital types and dispose of old ones properly.

Chemicals from backyard burning. Smoke from burning trash can contain harmful chemicals such as arsenic, carbon monoxide, cyanide, dioxins, formaldehyde and PCBs.

Stop backyard burning.³ Reduce waste, re-use, recycle and compost when possible. Dispose of remaining trash at a transfer station or with a sanitation service.

2 "AIR" ON THE SIDE OF SAFETY

Chemicals or other contaminants in the house are best reduced by ventilating with fresh air, or using exhaust fans if necessary.⁴ Here are some examples:

The exposure can come from...

Breathing chemicals from paints, wood finishing products and cleaning products

Breathing chemicals from new carpets or building materials

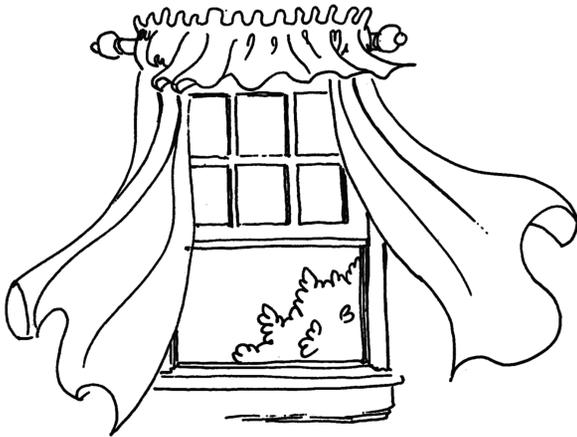
Some materials used for adult hobbies, such as glues and paints with strong odors, lead for stained glass work, etc.

What can I do?

When possible, either use these products outdoors or open windows. Schedule painting and finishing projects during warm months when windows can be left open.

Ask the merchant to air out new carpet before installing or delivering it; keep the windows open if possible until the smell has disappeared.

Keep children away from hobby areas and make sure there is plenty of ventilation when you are using the materials. Store chemicals in tight containers and keep them out of children's reach.



7 HOME SAFE HOME

Keeping your home and surroundings in good working order can stop trouble before it starts.^{13, 14} Here are some examples:

The exposure can come from...

Breathing radon gas

Carbon monoxide (CO) and other emissions from furnaces, appliances, space heaters, fireplaces and woodburning stoves

Molds (which can trigger allergies or asthma)

Chemical and bacterial contaminants in drinking water

Lead-based paint and dust

What can I do?

Test your home for radon¹⁵ (using a simple and inexpensive detector); if there is a problem, it can often be fixed quite easily.

Have your furnace checked about once a year or immediately if you smell fuel or smoke. Clean chimneys. Consider the use of CO detectors.^{16, 17}

Find the source of the leak or moisture and fix it.¹⁸ Dehumidifiers can help in damp settings; make sure you empty the reservoir and clean frequently.

If you are on a private well, test it periodically for bacterial contamination. Check with your local health department if testing is needed for other contaminants of concern in your area and ask for names of certified labs.

Use wet techniques for small jobs involving the removal of lead-based paint. For larger jobs, such as renovation projects, get professional help.¹⁹

6 KEEP KIDS AWAY

If you decide to use products that contain hazardous substances, reduce the risk to children by keeping them from getting too near. Here are some examples:

The exposure can come from...

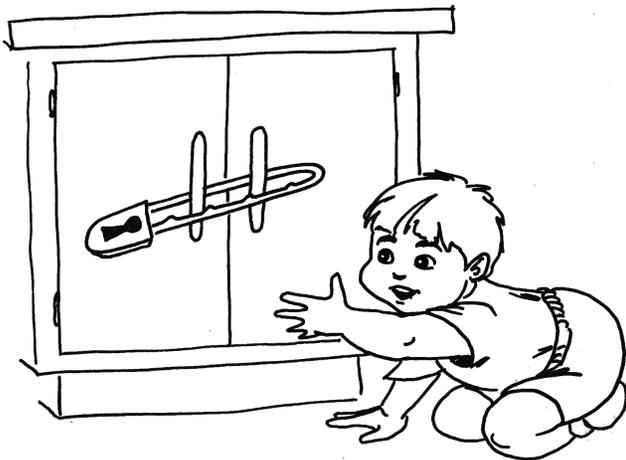
Household products such as glass cleaners, oven cleaners, drain openers, floor and furniture polishes, bleaches, dishwasher detergents, carpet cleaners, etc.

Pesticides such as flea and tick controls, lawn pesticides and indoor pesticides

What can I do?

Put locks on cabinets and store products out of children's reach.¹¹ Do not keep what you will not use again. Dispose of unwanted products properly.

Read and follow label directions carefully.¹² Keep children away from areas being treated during treatment and for a while after. Remove toys and stuffed animals from areas before treatment. Teach children not to touch flea and tick collars on pets or areas where other products, such as spray and spot treatments, were applied.



3 LESS IS BETTER

For many products, less toxic alternatives or methods are available. Using less of any chemical product is often desirable. Here are some examples:

The exposure can come from...

Cleaning products

Pesticides

Insect repellents

What can I do?

Have as few products as necessary, and use them sparingly. Consider less toxic or lower strength alternatives. Resist the use of anti-bacterial products, as they encourage the growth of stronger germs.

Many pests can be controlled without the use of chemical pesticides. Keep pests under control. Learn about IPM⁵ (Integrated Pest Management) techniques that focus on preventative pest control and use chemical pesticides as a last resort.

Use the lowest concentration of a repellent that is needed and then use only as much as you need for your situation.⁶ Do not let young children apply their own repellent. Spray repellent on your hands and then apply to children, avoiding the face.



4 WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE...

We know frequent washing is a great way to keep germs at bay. Get into the habit of washing hands, toys, fruits, vegetables and surfaces around the home, as it also reduces potential chemical exposures.

The exposure can come from...

Contaminants on and in food, such as bacteria, pesticides and other chemicals

Chemical dust and residues

What can I do?

Wash fruits and vegetables. Rinse meat, chicken and fish before you cook it. Also, skin and trim fish, since some contaminants concentrate in fatty tissues. For more information about sportfish contamination, see the Department of Health's Chemicals in Sportfish and Game brochure.⁷ Check the FDA website to review reports about pesticide residues in food.⁸

Wash children's hands and toys with soap and water frequently. Damp mop floors. Wash window sills and the area between the sill and the screen or outside window, where dust collects. If clothes get contaminated, wash them separately from children's items.⁹



5 IS THE EXPOSURE REALLY WORTH IT?

Many household products contain chemicals that can be harmful. The choices we make as consumers, parents and teachers can make a difference in exposure. Only you can decide what may be an "unnecessary" exposure for you and your family. Here are some examples:

The exposure can come from...

Lawn pesticides

Air fresheners, deodorizers and candles

Personal care products

Art supplies

What can I do?

Learn about ways to control pests and weeds that do not use chemical pesticides.¹⁰ Appreciate the look of a natural lawn.

Recognize that if you can smell it, the artificial scent or odor may be made up of chemicals. Nothing freshens a room like fresh air.

Ask yourself if the products you use are really necessary (hair spray? powders? perfumes?).

Oil paints, pastels, rubber cement, and spray adhesives are not good choices for young children. Look for the phrase "conforms to the federal ASTM D-4236 standard" on art supplies. Avoid permanent and scented markers.

