

Staying *Well*

Give Your Home a *Checkup*

You want your home to be a safe, pleasant refuge from the bustle and stress of your daily life. How can you make sure it's healthy for you and your family? Use this checklist to identify several basic health and safety hazards and learn easy ways to correct them.

Overall Home Health

- ✓ Many people are concerned about air pollution in the sky, but because you spend at least half your life inside, the air inside your home matters, too. One simple way to improve your home's healthfulness is to set a no-smoking policy indoors. Opening a window or running a fan is not enough to protect inhabitants from second hand smoke.
- ✓ Homes built before 1978 may have lead paint, especially dangerous to young children. If your home was built earlier, have a certified inspector test it. Research the best way to clean up, remove, and seal lead paint and how to remodel a home with lead paint before undertaking these potentially hazardous tasks.
- ✓ Have your heating system, fireplace and chimney checked yearly by a qualified technician. Any device that burns a carbon-based fuel (such as gas, oil, kerosene, or wood) can cause a deadly buildup of carbon monoxide (CO) if it doesn't vent properly. CO is a toxic gas you cannot see, taste, or smell. Be sure to install CO detectors as indicated.
- ✓ Look for and fix water leaks- either where moisture seeps into your home outside, such as through the roof or basement, or where indoor moisture collects, such as from a dripping pipe under a sink. Moisture encourages mold and insects.
- ✓ Regularly clean any appliance that circulates, heats, cools or alters the humidity of your indoor air, such as an air-conditioning unit. Follow manufacturer's instructions about cleaning and changing filters.



Your Kitchen

- ✓ Store your household cleaners and other chemicals in their original containers with their labels. If you must switch containers, never put such products in containers used or food. Keep them in cabinets with child-resistant latches or locks.
- ✓ When cooking, open the window or run the exhaust fan to remove moisture and fumes.
- ✓ Seal up food and clean spills promptly to discourage bugs and other pests that may



harm your health. For example, some people with asthma can have flare-ups by inhaling particles from cockroach droppings

- ✓ Flush your water pipes by running cold water through them for a couple of minutes before you drink or cook with water if it's been at least a few hours since you last ran the water. This reduces your risk of ingesting lead or copper from pipes. Sitting water and hot water can pick up these metals.

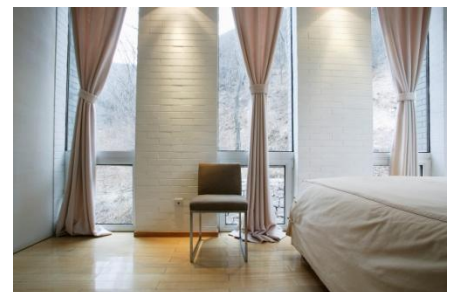
- ✓ If you have your own well for drinking water, have your water tested annually for contaminants. Call your local or state health department to find out about testing in your area. If you get drinking water from a public water system, your supplier must send you an annual water-quality report.

Your Bathrooms

- ✓ Run the exhaust fan-or, if you have no fan, open the window-when you shower or bathe. This reduces moisture and helps prevent growth of molds and dust mites.
- ✓ When electrical appliances, such as hair dryers or radios, are plugged in, keep them away from water sources, including the sink and bathtub. Move them where children can't get hold of them, Unplug them when not in use.
- ✓ Keep medicines and supplements in the containers they came in. Store them where children can't see or reach them, and use child-resistant latches to keep kids out.

Your Bedrooms

- ✓ Put a smoke alarm outside each bedroom and one on each level of your home without bedrooms. Test alarms monthly, keep them dust-free and change the batteries at least once a year. Replace alarms every ten years or as often as the manufacturer recommends.
- ✓ Install a CO detector outside each bedroom area. Install alarms and test and replace their batteries according to the manufacturer's instructions.



- ✓ Clean up surface dust; minimize moisture and wash bedding (and washable stuffed toys) in at least 130 degree water once a week to help control dust mites. These microscopic bugs or their droppings can trigger allergic reactions and asthma attacks.

Mop Up Mold

- ✓ Mold is everywhere and grows in moist, warm conditions. Some people experience no health problems, but others are sensitive or allergic to mold and may develop breathing problems and other symptoms. Some molds produce toxins. If you think mold in your home is causing health problems, talk with your doctor. To control mold, take these steps:
 - ✓ Clean hard surfaces that tend to get wet, such as kitchen counters or showers, with a commercial household cleaner or a solution of no more than 1 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water. Then dry well.
 - ✓ Keep humidity in your home between 40 and 60 percent. Ask at your local hardware store for a humidity meter. Use an air conditioner or a dehumidifier to reduce humidity.
 - ✓ Look for mold (it often looks like spots) on walls, ceilings and floors. If you see mold, clean the surface where it grows. Simply covering it, such as with paint, may allow the mold to resurface.