



A healthy home is free of dangerous chemicals

A home that is free of dangerous chemicals reduces poisonings, injuries, and other harmful effects.

The main idea

Many commonly used household products (including air fresheners, bleach, carpet shampoos, drain cleaners, furniture polish, and laundry and dishwasher detergents) contain chemicals that may be harmful. Use safer alternatives whenever possible. Other dangerous chemicals include radon (a natural gas that is radioactive), lead paint, and smoke from cigarettes, cigars, and pipes.

How it affects your health

If you breathe, swallow, or touch them, various chemicals may

- Cause dizziness, headaches, fatigue, depression, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Irritate the eyes, skin, and lungs
- Burn the skin
- Damage the liver, lungs, kidneys, and nervous system
- Cause cancer in various parts of the body
- Lead to convulsions, coma, and death

How to know if you have a problem

- Your household products contain strong fragrances and harsh chemicals, with labels that say *Caution*, *Warning*, *Danger*, or *Poison* (*Danger* and *Poison* are the most dangerous)
- Smoking in and around your home
- Peeling, flaking, or chalking paint in a home built before 1978 that may contain lead

How to fix the problem

- Use the safest possible household products, including homemade “green” products with ingredients like baking soda, vinegar, liquid castile soap, and salt
- Read product warning labels carefully, and follow directions for use, storage, and disposal
- Keep chemicals in their original containers, and never remove labels
- Keep dangerous household chemicals out of children’s reach
- Do not use air fresheners, other products with fragrances, or aerosol sprays
- Post the phone number for the Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) near every phone, and program the number into cell phones
- Do not allow smoking in or around your home
- If your home was built before 1978, have it tested for lead paint
- Test for radon, and install systems to remove it if necessary

How to learn more

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Household Products Database, <http://householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov/index.htm>
- Connecticut Poison Control Center, http://poisoncontrol.uchc.edu/about_poisons/index.html
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, www.epa.gov/wastes/conservematerials/pubs/hhw-safe.htm

For more information, call the Connecticut Department of Public Health’s Healthy Homes Initiative at 860-509-7299, see www.ct.gov/dph/healthyhomes, or call Infoline at 2-1-1

