

Environmental Wellness Checklist

What surrounds you each day in your home, work, or neighborhood can affect your health. Here are some tips to make your environments safer:

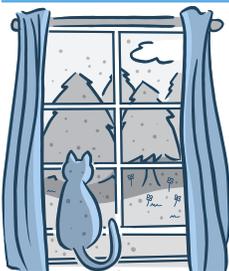


MAKE YOUR HOME HEALTHIER

Take a look around your home. Do you know what's in your household goods and products? Some chemicals can harm your health if too much gets into your body. Becoming aware of potentially harmful substances and clearing them out can help keep you and your family healthy.

To reduce toxic substances in your home:

- Clean with non-toxic products.
- Dust using a damp rag.
- Use a wet mop to clean floors.
- Vacuum with a HEPA filter.
- Open a window or use a fan to improve air circulation when you're cleaning.
- Have a good ventilation system.
- Wash your & your children's hands often.



REDUCE YOUR ALLERGIES

A change in season can brighten your days with vibrant new colors. But blooming flowers and falling leaves can usher in more than beautiful backdrops. Airborne substances that irritate your nose can blow in with the weather. When sneezing, itchy eyes, or a runny nose suddenly appears, allergies may be to blame. Take steps to reduce your exposure to allergens.

To reduce allergies:

- Avoid going outdoors when you're having allergies.
- If you go outside, wash your hair and clothing when you come inside.
- Keep humidity levels low in the home.
- Avoid upholstered furniture and carpets.
- Wash your bedding in hot water once a week.
- Vacuum the floors once a week.
- Talk with your doctor about medications and allergy shots.



STAY SAFE DURING HOT WEATHER

Heat is the biggest danger in the summer months. Being hot for too long can cause many illnesses, some of which can be deadly. But the warmer weather also brings lots of new opportunities to improve your health. Here's how to make the most of the summer months.

To create healthy summer habits:

- Do outdoor activities in the early morning or evening.
- Wear protective clothing.
- Use sunscreen that blocks UVA and UVB.
- Use sunglasses that block UVA and UVB.
- Try to stay in the shade when outdoors.
- Exercise in an air-conditioned space if possible. Or do water workouts.
- Drink plenty of liquids, especially water.



GUARD AGAINST COLD WEATHER

The frosty air of winter can be invigorating. But cold air can also pose threats to your health, whether you're indoors or outside. Learn to recognize the signs of your body temperature dropping too low, and take steps to keep yourself and your family warm and safe during the chilly season.

To guard against the cold:

- At home, wear socks, slippers, and a hat. Or stay covered up with a blanket.
- Keep your heat set to at least 68°F or higher during cold weather. For help paying your heating bills, see if you qualify for the HHS energy assistance program.
- Wear a windproof and water-proof jacket when going out in the cold. Dress in layers.
- If you see signs of hypothermia, get out of the cold. Warm up gradually with blankets. Avoid hot baths or heating pads. Get medical help if your temperature is below 95°F.



AIR QUALITY AND YOUR HEALTH

The combination of high temperatures, pollution, and airborne particles can brew up an unhealthy mixture in the air, just waiting to enter your lungs. This can make it hard to breathe and sap your energy. But air pollution can also occur inside—in homes, offices, or even schools. If you're regularly exposed to high levels of unhealthy air, the health consequences can linger for months or even years.

To reduce the effects of poor quality air on your health:

- Avoid outdoor activities in the afternoons on warmer days, when the risk of air pollution is highest.
- Avoid strenuous outdoor activities if the air is polluted. Check your region's air quality index at www.airnow.gov.
- Reduce pollutants in your home. Don't let anyone smoke in your home. Avoid burning candles, incense, or wood fires. Run fans or open a window when cooking. Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter.



CLEAR OUT TOXINS IN YOUR HOME

Some hazards in the home are easy to see. Like a loose electrical socket. Or torn carpet on the stairs. But others are harder to spot. And some are invisible, in the very air you breathe. These include lead, mold, and radon. But there are ways you can find and fix these unseen hazards. Learn how to reduce your exposure to these health hazards.

To reduce health hazards in your home:

- If your home was built before 1978, test exposed paint for lead.
- Have children tested for lead exposure regularly, from at least birth to age six.
- Use vent fans in rooms with moisture.
- If you have a leak or flood in your home, quickly dispose of damaged items.
- Clean small areas of mold on walls or fabric with hot, soapy water.
- Test your home for radon. Call 1-800-SOS-RADON (1-800-767-7236).



STAY SAFE IN THE WATER

Summer is a great time to go out and have fun in the water. But recreational waters—including swimming pools, lakes, and oceans—can sometimes get contaminated with bacteria and viruses. Swimming in contaminated water can make you and your family sick. But you can take steps to stay safer while playing in the water.

To stay safer while playing in the water:

- Shower before and after going swimming.
- Try not to swallow the water.
- Never go to the bathroom in the water.
Take kids for bathroom breaks and check diapers every hour. Change diapers away from the water.
- Stay out of the water if you've had diarrhea recently to help protect others from germs.
- Always wash your hands before you eat or drink.
- Cover open wounds with waterproof bandages.
- Don't swim in water that looks murky or has an odor.
- Stay out of the ocean for at least 24 hours after a storm. Avoid places where storm water is released on the beach.
- Check for warning signs posted around the area. Ask lifeguards about the water conditions.
- Check local alert systems. Visit go.usa.gov/subNw for information on U.S. beaches.