

**Less Energy = Less Air Pollution**

In 1992, the EPA introduced ENERGY STAR as a voluntary labeling program designed to identify and promote energy-efficient products to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Computers and monitors were the first labeled products. The ENERGY STAR label is now on over 50 product categories including major appliances, office equipment, lighting, and home electronics.

The typical household spends \$2,000 a year on energy bills. With ENERGY STAR, you can save more than 30% or more than \$700 per year, with similar savings of greenhouse gas emissions, without sacrificing features, style or comfort. ENERGY STAR helps you make the energy efficient choice.

If looking for new household products, look for ones that have earned the ENERGY STAR. They meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the EPA and US Department of Energy. You can identify them by the blue ENERGY STAR label:



For more information visit:  
<http://www.energystar.gov/>

**Questions, or want to learn more??**

Visit [www.epa.gov/region07](http://www.epa.gov/region07) or call us at (913) 551-7003, toll-free at 1-(800)-223-0425. The Region 7 office serves Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska, and 9 Tribal Nations. For information in your area, visit [www.epa.gov/epahome/whereyoulive.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epahome/whereyoulive.htm)

## STEPS TO A HEALTHY HOME



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KEEP IT . . .

DRY

SAFE

CLEAN

PEST-FREE

VENTILATED

MAINTAINED

CONTAMINANT-FREE

**Asthma** Asthma is a lung disease. It causes people to wheeze, cough, be short of breath, and sometimes even die. People with asthma can suffer from frequent periods of difficulty breathing called "asthma attacks." During an attack, the airways swell, the muscles around them tighten, and the airways produce thick, yellow mucus. **Asthma is not contagious, but it does run in families**, so if parents have asthma, their children are more likely to have it, too. Each person is different, but many things (called asthma "triggers") can cause asthma attacks.

Because there is no cure for asthma, **it is most important to work on preventing attacks.**

- **Keep a clean home.**
- **Keep people with asthma away from dust, dust mites, and smoke.**
- **Get medical advice and follow the doctor's instructions.**

For more information visit:  
<http://www.epa.gov/asthma>

**Mold** Molds reproduce by means of tiny spores; the spores are invisible to the naked eye and float through outdoor and indoor air. Mold may begin growing indoors when mold spores land on surfaces that are wet. There are many types of mold, and none of them will grow without water or moisture. You cannot eliminate all mold spores from a home, but you can take the following steps to prevent and get rid of mold.

- **Prevent: keep your house clean and dry following steps to prevent and get rid of mold.**
- **Identify: find mold that might be growing in your home.**
- **Respond: fix any water problems immediately and clean or remove wet materials, furnishings, or mold.**

For more information visit:  
<http://www.epa.gov/mold>

**Radon** Radon is a radioactive gas that cannot be seen, smelled, or tasted and is found naturally around the country. When you breathe air containing radon, the sensitive cells in your airway are irritated, increasing your risk of getting lung cancer.

Radon is found in the dirt and rocks beneath houses, in well water, and in some building materials. It can enter your house through soil, dirt floors in crawlspaces, and cracks in foundations, floors, and walls. All houses have some radon, but houses next to each other can have very different radon levels, so the only way to measure your particular risk is to test your own house. Radon is measured in "picoCuries per liter of air," abbreviated "pCi/L." The amount of radon outdoors is usually around 0.4 pCi/L, and indoors is around 1.3 pCi/L. Even though all radon exposure is unhealthy, radon at levels below 4 pCi/L are considered acceptable. If your home has more than 4 pCi/L, you should take action to lower this level.

For more information visit:  
<http://www.epa.gov/radon>

### **Smoke-Free Homes & Cars Program**

Secondhand smoke affects everyone, but children are especially vulnerable because they are still growing and developing. EPA has created a national Smoke-Free Home Pledge Initiative to motivate parents to protect their children.

**For more information visit:**  
<http://www.epa.gov/smokefree>

**Carbon Monoxide (CO)** Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless and toxic gas. Because it is impossible to see, taste or smell the toxic fumes, CO can kill you before you are aware it is in your home. At lower levels of exposure, CO causes mild effects that are often mistaken for the flu. The effects of CO exposure can vary greatly from person to person depending on age, overall health and the concentration and length of exposure.

**Carbon monoxide poisoning is caused by:**

- Operating fuel-burning products such as electrical generators without proper ventilation. Look at the manufacturers' instructions before operating any fuel-burning device in your home.
- Car exhaust entering the home from the garage.
- Combustion equipment such as furnaces or hot water heaters that are not working properly or have blocked exhaust systems.

**For more information visit:**  
<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/co.html>

**Lead (Pb)** In late 1991, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services called lead the "number one environmental threat to the health of children in the United States." There are many ways in which humans are exposed to lead: through air, drinking water, food, contaminated soil, deteriorating paint, and dust. Airborne lead enters

the body when an individual breathes or swallows lead particles or dust once it has settled. Before it was known how harmful lead could be, it was used in paint, gasoline, water pipes, and many other products. Old lead-based paint is the most significant source of lead exposure in the U.S. today. Harmful exposures to lead can be created when lead-based paint is improperly removed from surfaces by dry scraping, sanding, or open-flame burning. High concentrations of airborne lead particles in homes can also result from lead dust from outdoor sources, including contaminated soil tracked inside, and use of lead in certain indoor activities such as soldering and stained-glass making.

**For more information visit:**  
<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/lead.html>

**Mercury** Some household items may contain mercury. If a spill occurs in the home, children and adults may be exposed to mercury vapor. There are steps that parents can take to protect themselves and their children from exposures to mercury:

- **Learn which products may contain mercury and avoid buying products that contain mercury whenever non-mercury alternatives are available.**
- **Recycle or otherwise properly dispose of the mercury-containing products you have in your home.**
- **Handle products containing mercury carefully to avoid breakage or spills.**
- **Know how to clean up a spill properly; never use a vacuum cleaner.**

**For more information visit:**  
<http://www.epa.gov/mercury/>

**Asbestos** Asbestos is a naturally-occurring mineral fiber that has been used commonly in a variety of building construction materials for insulation

and as a fire-retardant. Today, asbestos is most commonly found in older homes, in pipe and furnace insulation materials, roofing and siding shingles, millboard, drywall joint compound, textured paints, sprayed-on ceiling texture, resilient sheet flooring, and floor tiles.

Elevated concentrations of airborne asbestos can occur after asbestos-containing materials are disturbed by cutting, sanding or other remodeling activities. Improper attempts to remove these materials can release asbestos fibers into the air in homes, increasing asbestos levels and endangering people living in those homes.

**For more information visit:**  
<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/asbestos.html>

**Pesticides** Pesticides used in and around the home include products to control insects (insecticides), termites (termicides), rodents (rodenticides), fungi (fungicides), and microbes (disinfectants). They are sold as sprays, liquids, sticks, powders, crystals, balls, and foggers. EPA registers pesticides for use and requires manufacturers to put information on the label about when and how to use the pesticide. It is important to remember that the "-cide" in pesticides means "to kill". These products can be dangerous if not used properly.

An alternative approach to pest control is Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM is a common sense approach that:

- **Denies pests food, water, shelter and a way to enter the home.**
- **Uses baits and powders, such as gel baits, traps and borate powder.**

IPM does not use as many harmful pesticides as traditional pest control. Children are among those most vulnerable to exposure. IPM strategies apply pesticides only as needed and use the least hazardous pesticides to control pests.

**For more information visit:**  
<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pesticid.html>

**GreenScaping** Our yards are our outdoor homes: fun, beautiful, great spaces for relaxing. GreenScaping encompasses a set of landscaping practices that can improve the health and appearance of your lawn and garden while protecting and preserving natural resources.

**Start with these five easy steps:**

- **Build and maintain healthy soil**
- **Plant right for your site**
- **Practice smart watering**
- **Adopt a holistic approach to pest management**
- **Practice natural lawn care**

**For more information visit:**  
<http://www.epa.gov/osw/consERVE/rrr/greenScapes/owners.htm>

**Reduce, Reuse, Recycle** The best place to start making a difference is at home. Learn how you can reduce, reuse, and recycle materials to decrease household waste, including food, paper, electronics, cleaners, pesticides, motor oil, and lawn and garden materials.

**Avoid or Reduce waste** - You can save money AND create less waste through changes in purchasing or use of goods. For example, rather than buying bottled water, use a refillable bottle. Choose products that can be used most efficiently, recycled in your area, and have minimal packaging.

**Re-use** - Re-use containers, packaging or waste products.

**Recycle** - Recycle waste materials so they can be remade into useable products.

**For more information visit:**  
<http://www.epa.gov/osw/consERVE/rrr>

