EPA Region 6—South Central

September 2022
Issue 11

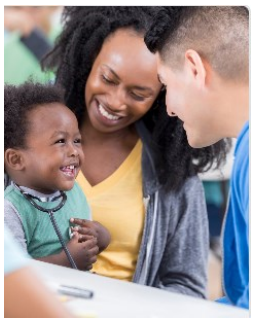
Helping Kids Learn in a Pollution Free Environment

October is Children's Health Month

EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection was established by executive order in 1997, and to this day continues to build on the excellent progress made to confront issues and provide solutions to children's environmental health.

At EPA we understand that children are not little adults. Pound for pound, children breathe more air, drink more water, and eat more food than adults. Children also have unique behaviors: they spend more time close to the ground and more time outdoors than adults. And we all know that babies and toddlers put nearly everything in their mouths.

These behaviors put kids at risk for higher exposures to chemicals. Many of their natural defense mechanisms are not fully developed, so exposures during these early life-stages – as well as maternal and prenatal exposures – can have lifelong health impacts.



EPA is proud to celebrate the 25th anniversary of our Children's Health office. To help implement the Presidential Executive Order Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks, the Office of Children's Health Protection is involved in rulemaking, policy, and research that involves children's environmental health. Our staff provide health risk assessment expertise to make sure potential regulations and policies address disproportionate risks to children. Since its inception in 1997, the Office of Children's Health Protection has supported children's environmental health by developing and providing information and tools for homes, schools, and daycare centers.

National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

No safe blood lead level in children has been identified. Here are important facts to know about lead exposure and its potentially harmful effects.

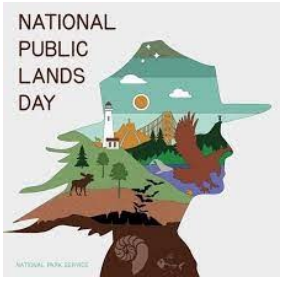
Lead is a toxic element, especially in young children. When absorbed into the body, it can result in damage to the brain and nervous system, learning and behavior problems, slow growth and development, and hearing and speech problems. Lead poisoning is preventable! The key is preventing children from coming into contact with lead.

Lead can be found inside and outside the home. The most common exposure is from lead-based paint, which was used in many homes built before 1978. Children can be exposed by swallowing or breathing lead dust created by old paint that has cracked and chipped, eating paint chips, or chewing on surfaces coated with lead-based paint, such as window sills.

There are simple steps that can be taken to protect family members from lead-based paint hazards in the home, such as regularly cleaning the home, washing children's hands and toys often, and wiping shoes before entering the home. If you live in a home built before 1978, a certified inspector or risk assessor can be hired to check your home for lead-based paint or lead hazards. If you are renting, ask your landlord to have your home or apartment tested.

Lead can also be found in drinking water. The most common sources of lead in drinking water are lead pipes, faucets, and fixtures. Other examples include some metal toys or toys painted with lead-based paint, furniture painted with lead-based paint, some metal-containing jewelry, some imported items (i.e., health remedies, foods and candies, cosmetics, powders or make-up used in religious ceremonies), and lead-glazed pottery or porcelain.

Learn more steps you can take to protect your family during National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 23-29.



Learning Links—National Public Lands Day Is Saturday, September 24, 2022

National Public Lands Day (NPLD) is the nation's largest single-day volunteer event for public lands. Established in 1994 and held annually on the fourth Saturday in September, this celebration brings out thousands of volunteers to help restore and improve public lands around the country. NPLD is also a **"Fee-Free Day"**—one of only five days a year when entrance fees are waived at national parks and other public lands.

This year, the theme for NPLD is **Giving Back Together.** During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, America's public lands acted as a safe haven for recreation, conversation, and the simple enjoyment of being outside the confines of our homes. In a time of disconnectedness and uncertainty, the outdoors brought people together and deepened our appreciation for the important role these spaces play in our lives. Now it's time for us to return the favor.

Join us on **Saturday, September 24, 2022**, as we celebrate the 29th annual National Public Lands Day and renew our commitment to securing a safer and healthier world for ourselves, our children, and generations to come. At this link, you'll find resources for registering an NPLD event, tips for hosting an in-person or virtual event, a map for locating NPLD events near you, and so much more.

Notes for Nurses—What Do the Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units Do?

What do the Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units do?

- Raise awareness about environmental conditions that may harm pregnant women, children, and families
- Provide guidance on ways to prevent and/or reduce harmful environmental exposures in everyday situations
- Provide practical advice on helping children cope and recover during and after environmental disasters (e.g., floods, wildfires, chemical spills, and other crises)
- Work with medical and nursing schools to add environmental health to curricula
- Train health professionals in practice
- Elevate the importance of public health
- Conduct a variety of educational trainings (in-person and remotely)
- Publish peer-reviewed articles that address environmental health
- Provide medical management guidance to health professionals
- Evaluate suspected toxic exposures

PEHSU
Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units

Custodian's Closet—How Can Schools Prevent Bed Bugs From Spreading and What Can Be Done if They Are Found?

It's very difficult for schools to know who might be bringing bed bugs into the school. That's why schools should develop administrative plans to prevent and limit the spread of bed bugs. Plans should include a written policy that limits the types of personal belongings a person may bring into school, and provide individual sealable storage containers for personal possessions, including coats and back packs. The school's Integrated Pest Management plan should also be updated to include bed bugs.

Be sensitive to the problem and to the student's emotions, use discretion and don't overreact. Although bed bugs have nothing to do with cleanliness or socioeconomic status, the stigma still persists. There is no need to send the student home. Remove the student from the classroom so that the school nurse or another qualified person can examine the student and his or her belongings. Remove any bugs and double bag them for identification. If a bed bug is found on a student or in their belongings, notify the parent or guardian. If a bedbug is found in a classroom, that room should be inspected for bed bugs and managed by a qualified individual in accordance with the school's integrated pest management policy. Learn more at epa.gov/bedbugs.

November 15 is America Recycles Day

Students, parents, and teachers can all make a difference in reducing waste at school. By practicing the "3 R's" of waste reduction—reduce, reuse, and recycle—we can all do our part.

Purchase and use school supplies made from recycled products, such as pencils made from old blue jeans and binders made from old shipping boxes.

Keep waste out of landfills by using school supplies wrapped in minimal packaging, and buying in bulk when possible.

Save packaging, colored paper, egg cartons and other items for arts and crafts projects. Look for other ways that you can reduce the amount of packing that you throw away.

EPA 50 by 30
RECYCLE 50% BY 2030

Explore Recycle City and check out our newly updated interactive game where you can make the city even greener!

Visit Recycle City

School IAQ Assessment Mobile App

The key to maintaining good indoor air quality (IAQ) is to conduct regular walkthrough assessments of your school facilities. The School IAQ Assessment Mobile app is a “one-stop shop” for accessing EPA’s comprehensive school IAQ management guidance and detailed walkthrough assessment checklists that address critical building-related environmental health issues such as ventilation, cleaning and maintenance, environmental asthma triggers, radon, and integrated pest management.

Schools that want to develop, sustain or reinvigorate their IAQ management programs can use this tool to identify and prioritize IAQ improvements. The School IAQ Assessment mobile app complements existing IAQ management programs and can become the central tracking mechanism schools and districts use to organize building assessments and prioritize IAQ improvements.

The app can be found at https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools.

What is Non Point Source Pollution?

Non Point Source (NPS) pollution generally results from land runoff, precipitation, atmospheric deposition, drainage, seepage or hydrologic modification. NPS pollution, unlike pollution from industrial and sewage treatment plants, comes from many different sources. NPS pollution is caused by rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground. As the runoff moves, it picks up and carries away natural and human-made pollutants, finally depositing them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, coastal waters and ground water.

NPS Pollution Activities for Students

Articles and Activities for Middle School Students

Nonpoint Source Pollution Awareness: Darby Duck, the Aquatic Crusader

Nonpoint Source Pollution Awareness: Word Search Puzzle

Nonpoint Source Pollution Awareness: What's Wrong with This Picture?

EPA Ecolabel Programs for Pollution Prevention

EPA and other Federal Agencies have developed several ecolabels that can help consumers identify greener products and services. Below is a list of ecolabels that address energy efficiency, water efficiency, products safer for human and environmental health, refrigerant emissions, vehicles emissions, and recycled materials.

ENERGY STAR®. The government-backed symbol for energy efficiency, providing simple, credible, and unbiased information that consumers and businesses rely on to make well-informed decisions. Products can earn the ENERGY STAR label by meeting the energy efficiency requirements set forth in ENERGY STAR product specifications. In 2019 alone, ENERGY STAR and its partners helped Americans save nearly 500 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity and avoid $39 billion in energy costs

Safer Choice. Products with the Safer Choice label help consumers and commercial buyers identify products with safer chemical ingredients, without sacrificing quality or performance. These products are rigorously reviewed ingredient-for-ingredient, adhere to strict performance standards, and are evaluated to ensure the potential of adverse human and environmental health impacts is minimized.

SmartWay®. This program reduces transportation-related emissions that affect climate change, reduce environmental risk for companies and increase global energy security. They also certify the 20% lowest-emitting passenger vehicles each model year, based on greenhouse gas and smog ratings. For further information, visit their **SmartWay Vehicles** webpage.

Significant New Alternatives Policy (SNAP). This EPA program evaluates and regulates substitutes for ozone-depleting and/or climate change causing chemicals used in refrigerators, air conditioners, and as aerosol propellants.

Comprehensive Procurement Guideline (CPG). This program is part of EPA's Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) initiative that promotes a system-wide approach to reducing materials use and the associated environmental impacts over the materials' entire life cycle. Buying recycled-content products encourages the materials collected in recycling programs to be used again in the manufacture of new products. Currently, the CPG program covers 61 products designated in eight categories.

WaterSense. This voluntary partnership program sponsored by the EPA is both a label for water-efficient products and a resource for helping you save water. The WaterSense label makes it simple to find water-efficient products, new homes, and programs that meet EPA's criteria for efficiency and performance. Switching to WaterSense certified products is an easy way to save you money and water. For example, simply replacing showerheads with WaterSense labeled models can reduce the average family's water and electricity costs by $70 and can save the average family more than 2,700 gallons of water per year, equal to the amount of water needed to wash 88 loads of laundry.

Additionally, EPA manages a list of Recommended Standards and Ecolabels ("Recommendations"). The Recommendations are intended to help purchasers easily identify credible and effective standards and ecolabels by purchase category and include over 40 private sector owned/managed standards/ ecolabels.

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Protecting human health and the environment.

United States Environmental Protection Agency

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ODDS AND ENDS

Upcoming Newsletters

In addition to the quarterly columns on Notes for Nurses, Custodian's Closet, and Learning Links, in our next issue, the Region 6 Healthy Schools Newsletter in December 2022 will highlight the following:

- Radon Month and
- National Pesticide Safety Education Month

Contacts

Healthy Schools is published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 - South Central in Dallas, Texas. Region 6 includes the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas as well as 66 Tribes. For general information about Healthy Schools, to provide feedback on this newsletter, or to be added or removed from the distribution list, please contact Cathy Gilmore, Senior Environmental Employee (SEE) for Healthy Schools at Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov

Disclaimer

Feedback

We would love your feedback on this newsletter or suggestions for future topics. Please email EPA at Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov.

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Improving Your Indoor Environment

Did you know we spend about 90% of our time indoors?

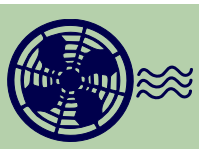
Levels of air pollution indoors can be as high, and sometimes higher, than outdoor levels. Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) can affect anyone's health, but older adults, children, and people with health conditions like asthma and heart disease can be more vulnerable.

Learn about indoor air pollution and the steps that you can take to improve your indoor environment.

Indoor Air and Health are Connected - Take Action

- Learn how reducing indoor contaminants may improve health. Tour the IAQ Demo House.
- Ventilate! When outdoor air quality and weather permit, open doors and windows. Run kitchen and bathroom exhaust fans when cooking and showering.
- Consider a high-efficiency air filter for your HVAC system and/or a portable air cleaner that does not intentionally emit ozone.
- Control indoor moisture to prevent mold. Fix water leaks and keep humidity levels between 30-50% by ventilating or using a dehumidifier if necessary.
- Install and inspect carbon monoxide and smoke alarms.
- Declutter, wipe dust with a damp rag, and vacuum to help reduce asthma triggers, allergens, pests, and pollutants.
- If you rent, inform your landlord right away about indoor air quality or water concerns. You may also consult Environmental Law Institute's Indoor Air Quality Guide for Tenants.

Vent Your Combustion Appliances



- Vent all combustion appliances to the outside. Combustion appliances like heaters, stoves, and dryers can produce dangerous pollutants in your indoor air.
- Have your combustion appliances (like wood heaters and gas stoves) inspected annually and follow manufacturer instructions. Appliances that are not working properly can produce dangerous pollutants like carbon monoxide.
- Never use a cooking stove to heat indoors and never use a fuel powered generator indoors, even during power outages.

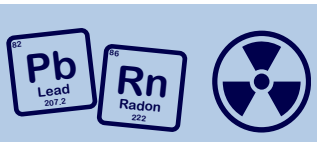
Consider Outdoor Air Quality

- Learn about pollution in your community and check outdoor air quality at AirNow.gov. Outdoor air pollution can impact IAQ.
- Be smoke ready. Purchase air cleaners and extra filters before wildfires start and create a clean air room. During fires, check air quality at fire.airnow.gov or local news.

Reduce Chemical Pollution Indoors

- Minimize the indoor use of cleaners, pesticides, perfumes, and other household and personal chemical products.
- Use less toxic cleaning products like mild soap and water. Look for products with EPA's Safer Choice label.
- Follow product label instructions, don't mix chemicals, and ventilate when painting, cleaning, sanitizing or disinfecting.
- Use non-chemical methods like integrated pest management whenever possible to manage pests. Avoid using pesticide sprays and foggers.
- Avoid smoking or using e-cigarettes indoors. If you live in multi-unit housing, consider advocating for a smoke-free policy in your building.

Check for Lead and Radon



- Test for lead in your home or school if it was built before 1978 and consult with your child's healthcare provider for advice on blood lead testing.
- Test your home or school for radon and fix if needed. Exposure to radon is the 2nd leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S.

Scan this QR code with your smartphone camera to view this document online

Scan here to visit EPA's Indoor Air Quality site, including resources for schools

EPA

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