

Healthy Homes, Healthy Families:

A guide to protecting your family's health by reducing environmental hazards in your home



Brought to you by the:

**Rochester Regional Children's Environmental
Health Center:**
www.rrcehc.org

**University of Rochester Environmental Health
Sciences Center:**
www2.envmed.rochester.edu/healthyhomes.html

This booklet provides practical tips for reducing environmental hazards in your home and information on the Rochester Regional Children's Environmental Health Center and other local organizations which provide significant resources related to children's environmental health.

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The University of Rochester Environmental Health Sciences Center
Community Outreach and Education Core

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**The Rochester Regional Children's
Environmental Health Center**

RRCEHC



The Rochester Regional Children's Environmental Health Center (RRCEHC) in the Golisano Children's Hospital at Strong and Rochester General Hospital provides resources and information on environmental exposures in children and in women who are pregnant, breast feeding, or considering pregnancy. RRCEHC is a New York State Center of Excellence in Children's Environmental Health, funded by the New York State Department of Health.

Information and Counseling concerning environmental exposures for children, pregnant women and mothers who are breastfeeding are available through experienced health care providers. Visit www.rrcehc.org for additional information.

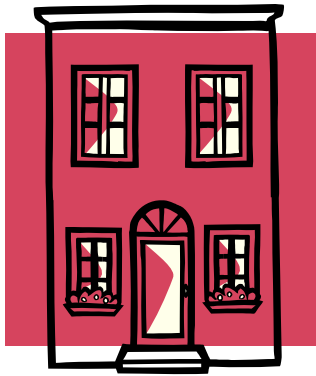
**CALL: 585-275-3638
(help is available 24 hours a day)**

Healthy Homes, Healthy Families

What is an environmental health hazard?

Environmental health hazards include physical hazards or toxins that may enter our bodies through air, food or water. These hazards can occur naturally or be introduced into the environment by people. Some environmental health hazards can make you sick right away; others show no signs for many years. That is why it is important to understand and avoid them now.

Why focus on homes?



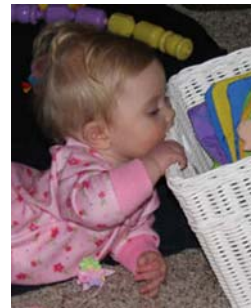
Americans, especially children, spend most of their time indoors. Environmental health hazards in homes can have major effects on families' health. Common home environmental health hazards can contribute to health problems like asthma, lead poisoning, or even cancer.

This booklet describes some common home environmental health hazards and suggests simple ways to reduce these hazards in your home. Local resources for more information are found throughout the booklet. Refer to the back cover for national and state resources.

Healthy Homes, Healthy Children

Why should women and children avoid hazards?

Environmental hazards can affect **children's** growing brains. **Children** are also at highest risk of exposure to environmental health hazards in the home because of their hand-to-mouth behavior, size, and activities such as crawling.



Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should also minimize environmental exposures. Environmental hazards can be passed from a mother's body to her unborn baby, or to the baby through breast milk. These hazards can

affect the baby's development and cause lifelong health problems.

RRCEHC | Asthma Triggers in the Home

Asthma is a chronic disease (one that cannot be cured). When you have asthma, the air passages in your lungs are very sensitive and can be inflamed and swollen.

Irritants, or “triggers,” can cause asthma attacks. Different people with asthma are sensitive to different triggers inside the home or in outdoor air.

During an asthma attack:

The bronchial tubes (airways)

- Inflammate/irritate
- Fill with mucus
- Muscles constrict

Symptoms of an asthma attack include: coughing, wheezing, chest tightness and difficulty breathing. Untreated asthma can lead to hospitalizations or death.



There are many possible asthma triggers in the home, including:

- **Tobacco smoke**
- **Dust mites**
- **Mold**
- **Pets**
- **Pests**
- **Strong fragrances**

What You Can Do:**If you have asthma**

- Go to the doctor for asthma follow up visits at least every 6 months.
- Make sure your bedroom is asthma safe:
 - Lightly spray area with water before dusting or sweeping to keep dust out of the air
 - Reduce clutter (this collects dust!)
 - Don't let pets in the bedroom
 - Use dust/allergen covers on pillows and mattresses
 - Wash bedding in hot (130°) water and vacuum carpets weekly

**Tobacco Smoke**

- Quit Smoking and encourage others to quit.
- Ask smokers to smoke outside with a jacket that can be left outside (clothes trap and carry smoke inside with you). This will help reduce other smoke-related health issues in your home.

Dust Mites

- Reduce the amount of fabrics, pillows, carpeting & stuffed animals in the bedroom.
- Use allergen dust covers on beds and pillows.
- Wash bedding and washable stuffed animals weekly.

**Household Chemicals**

- Store safely, away from children
- Store in the original container.
- Never mix chemicals.
- Read and follow the directions carefully.
- Use in a room with good airflow.
- Use safer alternatives to chemicals.

What You Can Do:**Mold and Moisture**

- Find and safely clean small amounts of mold with warm, soapy water.
- Throw out water-damaged or musty/moldy materials.
- Find and fix water leaks immediately.
- Use a vent fan or crack open a window when cooking or showering to reduce moisture.

**Pets**

- Keep pets out of bedrooms.
- Keep pets outside.
- Wash hands after touching pet.

Pests (rodents, cockroaches, etc.)

- Safely address the pest problem. Avoid using dangerous chemicals by preventing pests and eliminating them safely with traps.
- Eliminate the pests' source of food, water, and shelter.
- Store food in sealed containers, clean up crumbs and spills right away
- Fix leaks
- Clean up clutter and take the garbage out often
- Seal cracks and holes using steel wool and caulk to keep pests out



RRCEHC | Asthma Resources

RCAN (Regional Community Asthma Network of the Finger Lakes) provides FREE in-home environmental assessments of sources of asthma triggers and items to reduce triggers such as dust covers and HEPA vacuums for asthmatic children age 19 and under.

Mary Beth Schlabach, 585-442-0459
bbkbach@rochester.rr.com
1595 Elmwood Ave, 14620
www.rcanasthma.org

Monroe County Department of Public Health- Indoor Air Quality provides FREE in-home environmental assessments of potential causes of poor indoor air quality such as furnace combustion, asbestos, radon, carbon monoxide, and mold.

Peter Corrigan, 585-753-5075
pcorrigan@monroecounty.gov
111 Westfall Rd., 14620
www.monroecounty.gov/eh-indoorairquality.php

New York State Smoker's Quitline has trained Quitline Specialists to support you and your quit plans. Provides a FREE starter kit of nicotine patches or gum for eligible NYS smokers, and information about local stop smoking programs.

1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487)
www.nysmokefree.com

University of Rochester Environmental Health Sciences Center offers a virtual tour of a healthy home with information about how to deal with environmental health hazards in your own home.

www2.envmed.rochester.edu/healthyhomes.html

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County (CCE) provides information on Integrated Pest Management. See "Household Chemicals" (page 11).

RRCEHC | General Home Hazards

There are a variety of general home hazards that can cause unintentional injuries such as poisonings, falls, and choking. The following includes resources which provide a holistic approach to addressing hazards.



Resources:

Injury Free Coalition for Kids provides information and resources on general home and playground safety information; provides FREE car seats/car seat fitting stations (must income qualify).

Karen Knauf, 585-463-2957
karen_knauf@urmc.rochester.edu
601 Elmwood Ave, Box 655 14642
www.injuryfree.org

Monroe County Department of Public Health- Healthy Neighborhood Program, (10/1/09-9/30/10) City of Rochester residents living in zip codes 14609, 14621 and 14611 are eligible for education and FREE resources to make their homes healthier (give-aways may include cleaning supplies, carbon monoxide & smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, and educational materials).

By Appointment Only
585-753-5070
(Se Habla Español 585-753-5073)
www.monroecounty.gov/eh-hnp.php



University of Rochester Environmental Health Sciences Center offers a virtual tour of a healthy home with information about how to deal with environmental health hazards in your own home. This site also links to the Rochester Healthy Homes Partnership, which comprises over 30 organizations in Rochester that offer services for general environmental health hazard issues.

www2.envmed.rochester.edu/healthyhomes.html

Rochester Fire Department will install FREE smoke detectors and FREE carbon monoxide detectors for City of Rochester residents who are unable to purchase their own.



Lt. Willie Jackson, 585-428-9344
jacksonw@cityofrochester.gov
185 Exchange St., Suite 470, 14614
Smoke detector hotline: 585-428-1362

Monroe County Department of Public Health-Housing and General Sanitation addresses general housing complaints such as cockroaches, mice, garbage, odors, and insects.

Frank Mirabella, 585-753-5563
fmirabella@monroecounty.gov
111 Westfall Rd., 14620
www.monroecounty.gov/eh-generalsanitation.php

Many cleaning products, pesticides, medicines and other household chemicals are toxic and could be harmful to you and your children. Children are at the highest risk of being poisoned by household chemicals.

What You Can Do:

Store Safely

- Store medicine and household chemicals, like cleaning products, bleach, pesticides, automotive products, and paint out of the reach of children - use a locked cabinet whenever possible.
- Never leave household chemicals out/unattended.
- Store all products in their original container.
- Store chemicals separate from food products. Many chemical containers look like common food containers.



Use Safely

- Read the label on the household chemical carefully.
- Keep the room well-ventilated/have good air flow while you are cleaning.
- NEVER mix different household chemicals.
- Safely dispose of old or leftover chemicals.
- Consider using safer alternatives. Vinegar, baking soda and borax are excellent non-toxic cleaners.
- Use integrated pest management (IPM; see page 12) to deal with pests. If IPM doesn't work and you decide to use chemicals, call a professional.

Resources:**Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County**

provides information on integrated pest management (safer methods to address pest problems).

Lynn Braband, 585-461-1000 x241

249 Highland Avenue, 14620

lab45@cornell.edu

www.mycce.org/Monroe/index.taf

**Ruth A. Lawrence Poison and Drug Information**

Center provides information on unintentional poisonings and concerns about household/outdoor items that may be harmful. The center has a 24-hour emergency poisoning hotline.

Emergency Hotline: 1-800-222-1222

General Information:

Amy Davis, Public Educator

amy_davis@urmc.rochester.edu

601 Elmwood Ave, Box 321 14642

www.fingerlakespoison.org

**Monroe County Household Hazardous Waste Facility**

provides information on household chemicals including mercury and pesticides. They will also collect and properly dispose of your old chemicals, paints, anti-freeze, mercury, pesticides, etc. Call to make an appointment!

585-753-7600 (menu option 3)

444 E. Henrietta Rd., 14620

www.monroecounty.gov/des-hhw.php

**University of Rochester Environmental Health**

Sciences Center offers a virtual tour of a healthy home with information about how to deal with environmental health hazards in your own home.

www2.envmed.rochester.edu/healthyhomes.html

RRCEHC | Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral fiber that is long-lasting. It is used throughout construction for insulation, floor tiles and other materials. Asbestos was banned in most construction materials in 1989, so many older homes contain asbestos. When material containing asbestos is intact, it poses no health risk. When the material is broken or crumbling, asbestos fibers can get into the air and be breathed in. Long term exposure to these fibers can cause asbestosis, lung cancer, or mesothelioma.



Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless, toxic gas. Carbon monoxide comes from burning fuels (gas, oil, coal or wood). You cannot know if it is in your house without a special carbon monoxide detector. CO can kill you or make you ill before you are even aware it is in your home.



Your **furnace** plays a large role in the quality of air in your home. It is important to make sure that your furnace is working properly to avoid indoor air problems such as dust and carbon monoxide.

Mold is a fungus that grows in areas of the home that are warm and moist like the attic, basement, bathroom and kitchen. Some kinds of mold spores can be hazardous to your health or trigger attacks in asthmatics.

Radon is a colorless, odorless, naturally occurring radioactive gas found in the soil in some areas. Radon may enter basements of houses through cracks in concrete walls and floors or through dirt floors. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States.



Tobacco Smoke can cause many serious health problems. See pages 5 and 6 for more information.

RRCEHC | Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)

What You Can Do:

Asbestos

Contact **Monroe County Department of Public Health-IAQ** for free in-home environmental assessments of indoor air quality.

Peter Corrigan, 585-753-5075

pcorrigan@monroecounty.gov

111 Westfall Rd., 14620

www.monroecounty.gov/eh-indoorairquality.php

Carbon Monoxide (CO)

Install a CO detector near sleeping and living areas.

The **Rochester Fire Department** will install FREE smoke detectors and FREE carbon monoxide detectors for City of Rochester residents who are unable to purchase their own.

Lt. Willie Jackson, 585-428-9344

jacksonw@cityofrochester.gov

185 Exchange St., Suite 470, 14614

Smoke detector hotline: 585-428-1362

Furnace

Replace furnace filter with a new high quality filter at least 3 times/year.

Mold

Clean up small amounts of mold with soapy water or a 10% bleach solution and reduce excess moisture in the home. For bigger jobs, contact **Monroe County Department of Public Health-IAQ** (see above)

Radon

Test your home. Kits can be purchased online or at any hardware store. Or contact the **New York State Department of Health-Radon Division**. They provide information on radon and sell radon test kits.

1-800-458-1158 x27556

www.nysradon.org

RRCEHC | Lead Hazards

Lead Poisoning

Lead is a toxin that affects the brain, heart, bones, and kidneys. Because of children's growing brains and bodies, lead poisoning has a larger impact on children than adults. Even low amounts of lead in children's bodies can cause learning and behavioral problems, often with no physical symptoms. This includes a lower IQ, difficulty paying attention, and delinquent behavior.



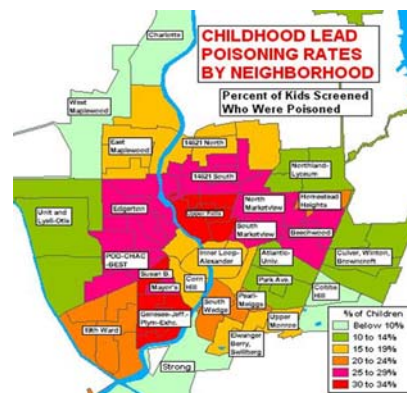
Lead Hazards in the Home

Lead poisoning occurs when harmful amounts of lead enter the body through swallowing or breathing. Homes built before 1978 are at risk for containing hazardous leaded dust, paint, and soil. Lead can also be found in some jewelry, toys, home remedies, ceramics, candy, or water.



Lead in Rochester

Leaded paint in homes was banned in the United States in 1978; paint in homes built before then may contain lead. Most of the homes in the City of Rochester were built before 1978 which puts them at risk for lead hazards.



RRCEHC | Lead Hazards

What You Can Do:

- Have your child tested for lead.
Children must be tested at ages 1 & 2.
- If you are pregnant your doctor should assess your risk for lead exposure.
- Get your home professionally tested for lead if it was built before 1978.

- Use "Lead Safe Cleaning Techniques"
 - Wash window sills and floors weekly.
 - "Work wet" - don't sweep or dust dry.
 - Clean with soap and water.
 - Contact RCAN to borrow a HEPA vacuum (see page 8).



- Wash children's hands and toys with soap and water frequently.
- Have children eat foods rich in iron, calcium, vitamin C.
- In pre-1978 homes, keep children away from cracking or peeling paint and bare soil.



- Renters- talk with your property owner about safely addressing potential lead hazards. Contact the City/NSC for a FREE lead inspection (see page 22).
- Homeowners – apply for a lead hazard reduction grant from the City of Rochester or Monroe County.
- Cover bare soil with grass or mulch.
- Use "Lead Safe Work Practices" when renovating a pre-1978 home (contact Monroe County Health Department for FREE classes, see page 18) or hire a contractor that is certified by the EPA under the "Renovation, Repair and Painting" rule (RRP). Women and children should stay away until work is complete and properly cleaned up.

Resources:

City of Rochester Lead Hazard Control Grant Program provides financial assistance for landlords to address lead hazards for up to \$18,000 per unit in the City of Rochester. Offers FREE Lead Safe Work Practices training courses.

The Housing Council
75 College Ave, Suite 412
Rochester, NY 14607
585-546-3700
www.thehousingcouncil.org

Lead Resource Center
Action for a Better Community
917 E. Main St.
Rochester, NY 14604
585-325-7550

City of Rochester Lead Ordinance provides FREE lead inspections of pre-1978 homes in the City of Rochester; city code requires that all pre-1978 rental homes be assessed for lead hazards; FREE lead inspections available by request for owner-occupants in Rochester.

Len Merritt, 585-428-LEAD (5323)
leonard.merritt@cityofrochester.gov
30 Church St., City Hall, Room 208B 14614
www.cityofrochester.gov/lead/

RRCEHC | Lead Hazards

Resources:

Monroe County Department of Public Health Lead Hazard Control Grant (HUD) provides up to \$5,500 in reimbursement toward lead hazard control for low income homeowners.

Lee Houston, 585-753-5571
lhouston@monroecounty.gov
111 Westfall Rd., 14620
www.monroecounty.gov/eh-hudgrant.php

Monroe County Department of Public Health Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program offers general information on lead hazards and provides FREE Lead Safe Work Practices training courses.

Susan Painting, 585-753-5087
spainting@monroecounty.gov
111 Westfall Rd., 14620
www.monroecounty.gov/eh-leadpoisoning.php

Resources:

Rochester Children's Environmental Health Center provides information concerning exposures in children, pregnant or lactating women, and women planning a pregnancy.

Call Center, 585-275-3638 (24-hours)
Rochester, New York
www.rrcehc.org

NeighborWorks Rehab Loan Program provides lead clearances and rehab loan program for people who are not bankable, but are bankworthy in the City of Rochester.

Eric VanDusen, 585-325-4170 x314
evandusen@nwrochester.org
570 South Ave, 14620
www.nwrochester.org/

The Housing Council provides landlord education, foreclosure prevention, pre-purchase counseling and fair housing education in the City of Rochester.

Alex Castro, 585-546-3700
info@thehousingcouncil.org
75 College Ave, Suite 412 14607
www.thehousingcouncil.org/

Resources:

Action for a Better Community - Lead Resource Center provides grants and financial assistance (partially through the City of Rochester) to address lead hazards.

Steven Turner, 585-325-7550
sturner@abcinfo.org
917 East Main St, 14604
www.abcinfo.org/

Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning (CPLP) offers information and resources on lead poisoning.

Joseph Hill, 585-256-2267 x129
jhill@leadsafeby2010.org
1150 University Ave., 14607
www.leadsafeby2010.org/

Western New York Lead Poisoning Resource Center evaluates and provides medical treatment for children with elevated blood lead levels. Works to educate the public about the prevention of lead poisoning.

Rochester General Hospital
585-922-5658

Golisano Children's Hospital at Strong
585-276-3105

Toll-free
1-877-352-5775

RRCEHC | Legal/Financial Information

Renters, property owners, and owner-occupants may face issues such as the withholding of rent and code enforcement. Others may have difficulty obtaining grants/loans or accessing resources to make homes healthier. There are several legal and financial resources in Rochester to help with these issues.

Resources:

NeighborWorks Rehab Loan Program, provides education and counseling, lending and flexible mortgage programs, and technical services including lead paint inspection.

Eric VanDusen, 585-325-4170 x314
evandusen@nwrochester.org
570 South Ave, 14620
www.nwrochester.org

The Housing Council, provides information on apartment listings, public and subsidized housing listings, grants, and foreclosure prevention.

Alex Castro, 585-546-3700
info@thehousingcouncil.org
75 College Ave, Suite 412, 14607
www.thehousingcouncil.org

Legal Aid Society of Rochester, NY, Inc., provides direct civil legal services, including lay advocacy and related human services to adults and children.

585-232-4090
One West Main Street Suite 800, 14614
www.lasroc.org

Monroe County Legal Assistance Center, provides FREE legal assistance to people with civil legal problems such as withholding rent as a tenant, a landlord not making repairs, and fair housing rights.

585-325-2520
One West Main Street 4th Floor, 14614
www.lawny.org

RRCEHC | Legal/Financial Information

Rochester Housing Authority, provides low-income housing in the City of Rochester and programs to teach life skills and self-sufficiency. Works with local organizations to improve quality of life in Rochester.

585-697-3600
675 W. Main Street, 14611
www.rochesterhousing.org

City of Rochester Neighborhood Quadrant Service Centers (NSC), provide support for tenants and owner occupants for quality of life issues like heating problems, unsanitary conditions, etc. Will do FREE lead inspections of pre-1978 rental homes in the City of Rochester. Normal NSC operating hours are **Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.** Calls to NSC Offices during off hours are taken by staff at the City's 311.

Northwest Quadrant NSC

585-428-7620
1099 Jay St - Bldg D / Suite 200, 14611
Jose' Cruz, Administrator
jose.cruz@cityofrochester.gov

Northeast Quadrant NSC

585-428-7660
500 Norton St, 14621
Marisol Lopez, Administrator
marisol.lopez@cityofrochester.gov

Southwest Quadrant NSC

585-428-7630
923 Genesee St, 14611
David Hawkes, Administrator
david.hawkes@cityofrochester.gov

Southeast Quadrant NSC

585-428-7640
846 S. Clinton Ave, 14620
Peter Saxe, Administrator
peter.saxe@cityofrochester.gov



National and State Healthy Homes Resources

Federal Agencies - Several government organizations provide resources related to healthy housing:

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) www.epa.gov
Region 2 Office: 212-637-3000
(serving NJ, NY, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands and Seven Tribal Nations)

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
www.hud.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
www.cdc.gov

Department of Agriculture: Research, Education and Economics (REE)
www.ree.usda.gov
202-720-5923

Other national resources - These non-governmental agencies operate at the national level:

National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH)
www.nchh.org
410-992-0712

National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)
www.neha.org
866-956-2258 (toll free)

New York State - The primary state agency responsible for home environmental health is the New York State Department of Health:

<http://www.health.state.ny.us/>