

Healthier Homes

We often think about the environment as the world outside of our homes—and we focus on steps to help keep our air, land and water sources clean.

Equally as important, however, is the environment inside of our homes—which is essentially an “ecosystem” that needs to be maintained and protected from a wide variety of hazards that can impact our health.

At the onset of the flu season, now is an excellent time to adopt healthier habits in the home to reduce the risk of illness and improve our environment—inside and out.

Green Products: Consider eco-friendly products for the home that are made with green or low-impact materials. Today there is an increased use of certified 100 percent organic cotton, recycled cotton, and alternative fibers such as bamboo or soy silks to manufacture household textiles, including clothing, bedding and bath towels. There also are organic covers for mattresses and pillows that are essential to helping prevent the trigger of asthma attacks.

Other everyday products, including children’s lunch boxes, backpacks and toys, are made with recycled fabrics (often from discarded plastic drinking bottles). Be sure to look for plastics that are PVC-free.

Clean Green: Many of today’s cleaning products are non-toxic, biodegradable, and made from renewable resources (not petroleum). Additionally, it is easy to make your own cleaners with baking soda (a great stain remover), vinegar and warm water. Baking soda also eliminates odors when used in the refrigerator and trash can, or when sprinkled on the carpet then vacuumed. To avoid accidental ingestion and possible poisoning, always remember to keep cleaning products (even organic ones) out of the reach of children.

When selecting cleaners and soaps, the FDA recommends avoiding antibacterial and antimicrobial choices, which sometimes add to the risk of breeding “super germs.”

For families with asthma sufferers, you should wash bed sheets and blankets in hot water weekly to reduce asthma triggers.

Clean Air: Our homes are better insulated than ever before, which is good for keeping heat and air conditioning inside the home. However, this also keeps germs and toxins trapped inside. Try to change the air in your home by leaving windows open when cleaning. Also, have a few broad-leaf houseplants around to help filter the air.

You should vacuum carpets frequently to remove allergens that may be released into the air, triggering asthma attacks and allergic reactions. Another great idea is to simply leave your shoes at the door. This helps keep the air clean by not bringing dirt, oil, pollen and other toxins into the home.

Home Maintenance: To reduce or eliminate the loss of warm or cool air, be sure to seal gaps around roofing, attic spaces, and doors. This also reduces the chance of disease-bearing rodents and insects entering your house. At the same time, be mindful of proper ventilation in the attic to avoid moisture build up that can lead to mold growth—another contributor to allergies, asthma, and other illnesses. ☁️

