

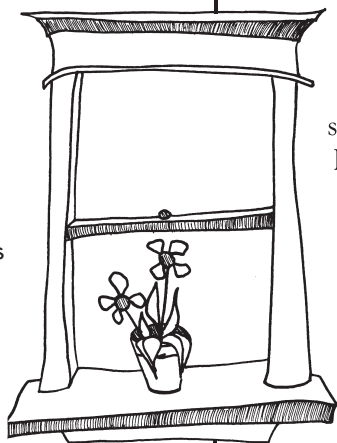
# Air Quality

## Poor air quality can cause a variety of health problems

Smoke and other combustion byproducts can irritate the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, and throat and cause shortness of breath.

Exposure can lower your resistance to cold and flu viruses and worsen the symptoms of asthma and emphysema.

Carbon monoxide from home heating systems causes approximately 200 deaths a year in the United States.



The quality of the air inside your home can affect your family's comfort and health. The temperature and humidity levels should be controlled and the air should be clean and free of harmful chemicals. Poor ventilation (either too much or too little) may contribute to air quality problems. Good ventilation disperses harmful chemicals and controls humidity. Symptoms associated with poor air quality include stuffy nose, sore throat, burning eyes, headaches, and fatigue. People who have asthma, respiratory allergies, or emphysema are especially sensitive to air quality problems.

### *Healthy home tips on smoke and combustion byproducts*

- ✓ Ban tobacco products from your home. If you smoke, try to quit or smoke outside your home.
- ✓ Install a carbon monoxide detector near the bedrooms of your home.
- ✓ Have your gas appliances and chimneys inspected every year to make sure that they are functioning properly. Replace furnace filters each fall. Maintain your gas-powered clothes dryers, ranges, and water heaters according to the manufacturer's directions.
- ✓ Be sure that wood-burning fireplaces and stoves are vented properly so that smoke and carbon monoxide do not buildup or accumulate in your home. Don't burn treated wood or waste building materials in your stove or fireplace.
- ✓ Never allow a car or other gasoline engine to idle inside a garage or carport.
- ✓ Never use a charcoal grill indoors or in an enclosed area.
- ✓ Provide sufficient combustion air sources for fuel appliances to manufacturers specifications.

### *Healthy home tips on mold and mildew*

- ✓ Control humidity. Most experts recommend using a dehumidifier during the summer months to reduce humidity levels. Use exhaust fans to vent moisture from the kitchen and bathroom. Be sure the clothes dryer is vented to the outdoors and that the vent pipe is not clogged or obstructed.
- ✓ Fix plumbing leaks and moisture problems in basements before a mold or mildew problem occurs.
- ✓ Don't store firewood inside your home. Bark-covered logs contain millions of mold spores and provide a great place for molds to grow.

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### *Healthy home tips on volatile chemicals*

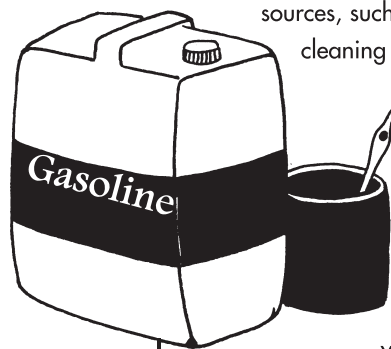
- ✓ Ask your builder or sales representative to show you alternative products that are low in volatile chemicals.
- ✓ Increase the amount of outdoor air that enters your home. Most home heating and cooling systems do not bring fresh air into the house. By opening windows and using window and attic fans, when weather permits, you can increase the ventilation in your home and reduce your family's exposure to indoor air pollutants.
- ✓ Choose low-toxicity products. Look for paints, cleansers, and other household products that are low in volatile chemicals and other toxic ingredients.
- ✓ Read product labels. These will tell you whether products can be used safely in a poorly ventilated, indoor space. The label may also tell you whether the product contains chemicals that can cause cancer or other health problems. Choose the product with the fewest warnings.

## Mold and mildew

Mold and mildew thrive in damp, poorly vented environments. Exposure to these agents can cause upper respiratory problems—especially in people who have allergies or asthma. By controlling humidity and correcting plumbing leaks and condensation problems, you can prevent the growth of molds and mildew in your home.

## Volatile organic chemicals (VOCs)

VOCs can enter the air in your home from a variety of sources, such as paints, cleaning solvents, pressed wood, new carpets and upholstery fabrics. These chemicals can irritate your eyes, throat, and nasal passages and cause symptoms of dizziness, headache, and fatigue.



# Radon

Radon is a colorless, odorless, gas in the soil under your home that can seep into your home through cracks in the foundation. Exposure to radon causes thousands of lung-cancer deaths in the U.S. each year. Only smoking causes more. Because radon can exist anywhere in Wisconsin, all homes should be tested.



# Asbestos

Asbestos has been used in many building materials such as heating system insulation, pipe wrap, pipe lagging (plaster-type covering), floor tiles, slate siding, slate shingles, ceiling tiles, and may be found in vermiculite insulation. Asbestos becomes a problem when these materials are deteriorated, damaged, or disturbed and asbestos fibers are released into the air. Breathing air that contains asbestos can increase your risk of cancer.

## *Healthy home tips on radon*

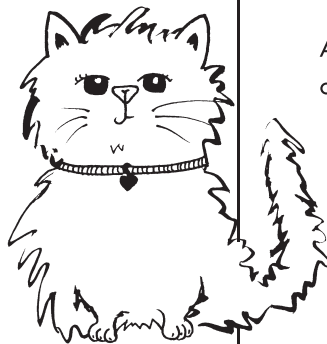
- ✓ Test your home for radon. Many hardware and home supply stores sell low-cost, short-term testing kits. Your local health department may also have testing kits. Look for a kit that displays the phrase “Meets EPA Requirements” on the package. Conduct the test on the lowest floor of your home that is lived-in. If the radon level is less than 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L), no follow up is needed.
- ✓ If the level is above 4 pCi/L, repeat the short-term test or do a yearlong test to determine the average radon level in your home.
- ✓ Take corrective steps if the second reading is also above 4 pCi/L. Call the Radon Information Center at 1-888-LOW RADON, contact your local public health office for additional information, or see the website [www.lowradon.org](http://www.lowradon.org) for information on radon in Wisconsin.

## *Healthy home tips on asbestos*

- ✓ Have a certified asbestos inspector inspect your home and analyze materials to determine whether they contain asbestos. If asbestos is present and in good condition, it may be best to manage it without removal.
- ✓ Don't try to remove asbestos by yourself. This job should only be done by a trained and licensed professional.
- ✓ Call the Wisconsin Environmental and Occupational Health Asbestos Program at 608 261-6876 for more information.

## Healthy home tips for asthma sufferers

- ✓ Limit exposure to animal dander. If the asthma sufferer is allergic to cats or dogs, the family pet may need to be removed from the home. If this is not feasible, ban the animal from the sufferer's bedroom.
- ✓ Consider adding a high efficiency air filter to your home's heating system.
- ✓ Control humidity. By keeping the relative humidity level below 50% and correcting moisture problems, you can reduce the growth of dust mites, molds, and mildew in your home.



- ✓ Reduce the level of respiratory irritants such as tobacco smoke, wood smoke, solvents, and pollen in your home.

- ✓ Eliminate cockroaches. This can be done by regular careful cleaning (especially of the kitchen area), daily trash

removal, and—if needed—a professional pest control program.

- ✓ Control dust. Damp mop, damp dust, and vacuum frequently. Encase mattresses and pillows with dust-proof covers. Remove carpeting, draperies, book collections, stuffed animals, and feather or down-filled pillows and comforters from the asthma sufferer's bedroom. Wash bedding once a week using hot water to kill dust mites.



## Asthma

Asthma is a chronic disorder of the airways that causes repeated episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and cough. More than 3,000 children and young adults are hospitalized every year in Wisconsin due to asthma. Biological pollutants, such as pet dander, molds, pollens, and cockroach allergens can trigger the symptoms of asthma. Exposure to lung irritants, such as smoke, solvents, ozone, and automotive exhaust can also contribute to this disease.