12 WAYS

TO A HEALTHY HOME











NEW HAMPSHIRE HEALTHY HOMES

Strength Built on Partnerships

Some health problems for children and adults may start in the home. Even when we want to keep our families safe and healthy, it is hard to know what steps to take to do so. In addition to the information in this booklet, below are a few additional resources that can provide you with more information and assistance for your family. Look on the back cover for the contact information of each program.

NH 211

- NH 2-1-1 is a free and confidential call from anywhere in NH offering person-to-person assistance.
- Available 24/7 with translation assistance in over 150 languages.

New Hampshire 2-1-1
Dial 211

HEALTHY MOMS/BABIES

- Home visiting services for pregnant moms and families with children 3 years and under.
- Parenting support & child health and developmental screenings.

Maternal & Child Health
1-603-271-4517



HEALTHCARE

- Health coverage pays for provider services, medications, and hospital care.
- Insurance plans can differ by how much you pay and the services that are covered.

www.coveringnewhampshire.org
1-800-852-3416

LEGAL HELP

- New Hampshire Legal Aid is a group of agencies who provide a range of legal services to low income families in the state.

NH Legal Aid
1-800-639-5290

NH Legal Assistance
1-800-562-3174

12 Ways to a Healthy Home

This booklet was created by the statewide Healthy Homes Committee to share information on hazards that exist in homes and how they can impact you and your family's health.

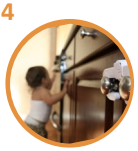
We hope it will help you find resources, tips, and more information on ways to provide a healthier home for you and your family!

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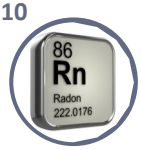
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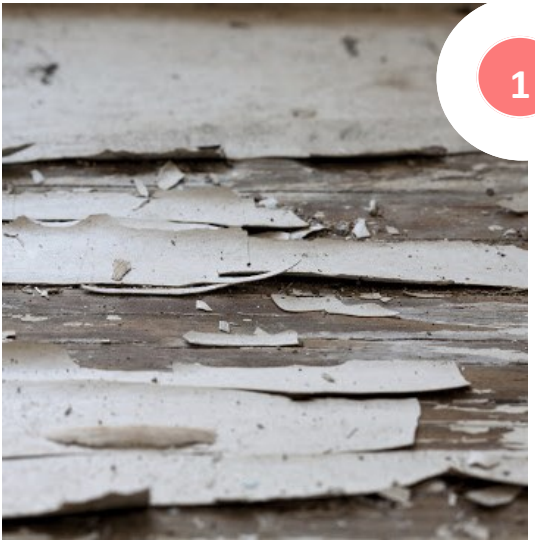
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1

Lead can be found in dust, paint, soil, drinking water and in a variety of household objects. If lead is ingested or inhaled, even in very small amounts it can be a serious health risk, especially for young children and pregnant women. If your home was built before 1978 it may contain lead paint. Lead dust is created from everyday activities such as opening and closing lead-painted windows and doors and when performing common household renovations and repairs.

62% of New Hampshire homes could have lead hazards that can cause poisoning.

WHAT TO DO



- **Test all children under six for lead.**
- **Hire a licensed lead inspector** to find out if your home has lead hazards.
- **Use an EPA "RRP Certified" contractor** who understands how to use lead-safe work practices when renovating or repairing your home.
- **Regularly wash** hands, toys, bottles, pacifiers, floors, windowsills and other areas where leaded dust may settle.
- **Be careful that you don't bring home lead** from your job site or hobby.

Tobacco Smoke

2



is produced when people smoke tobacco products. *Second-hand tobacco smoke* can be inhaled by those nearby. There is no safe level of exposure to this smoke. *Third-hand tobacco smoke* is the poisons and particles left behind on surfaces like carpets, clothes, and furniture after someone smokes. Children and pets often spend time in places where third-hand smoke settles. *Electronic nicotine devices,* like e-cigarettes, increase blood pressure, impact heart & breathing rates, and contain toxic chemicals.

1,900 adults in New Hampshire die annually from smoking.

WHAT TO DO

- **Until you quit, choose to smoke outside.** Family, friends and visitors should never smoke or use e-cigarettes or vaping products in your home.
- **Keep yourself and your children away from places where smoking is allowed**. Tobacco smoke can cause severe health issues in children, especially in children with respiratory conditions.
- **Nicotine can be fatal to adults and children.** In case of a liquid nicotine exposure, call the Poison Center at **1-800-222-1222.** Always keep nicotine products away from children and pets.
- **Ask your doctor for ways to quit smoking**. Call the NH Tobacco Helpline at **1-800-QUIT-NOW** for ways to help quit tobacco and other electronic nicotine devices.



3

Asthma is a condition where the airways become swollen resulting in wheezing, coughing, or chest tightness. Tobacco smoke, moisture, mold, pets, rodents, and insects in your home can trigger an attack. Know the common asthma triggers and ways to avoid them.

1 in 9 New Hampshire residents have asthma. The "spacer" pictured above is a helpful tool used to deliver asthma medication.

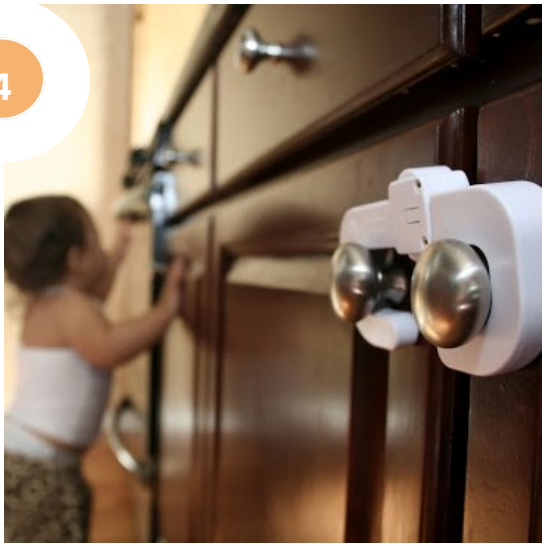
WHAT TO DO

- **Know your triggers.** Avoid tobacco smoke, mold, and rodents (see sections on *Tobacco Smoke, Moisture & Mold,* and *Rodents & Insects*). Take steps to prevent exposure to them.
- **Wash bedding in hot water.** Use mattresses & pillow encasements.
- **Clean surfaces and floors regularly** with a wet or microfiber cloth. Use a HEPA vacuum for carpets and furniture.
- **Keep pets out of the bedroom**. Pet dander can increase symptoms.
- **Have an Asthma Action Plan.** Work with your doctor to develop a written Asthma Management Plan.
- **Know your medicines** and symptoms.
- **Get a flu shot**.



Injuries can occur when appliances, medicine, bathtubs, stairs, and cleaners are not monitored or stored safely. To prevent falls and poisonings, closely monitor your children, older adults, and other family members.

4



52% of deaths between the ages of 0-34 years old in NH are due to injury.

WHAT TO DO

- **Install grab bars** and use non-slip mats in the tub and shower.
- **Install lighting** over stairs, steps, and on landings.
- **Keep stairs clear.** Avoid excessive clutter in and around your home to avoid falls
- **Never let children jump** on beds or climb on furniture.
- **Keep beds, cribs, and other furniture away** from windows.
- **To avoid scalds,** set the thermostat on your water heater to 120° F or lower.
- **Prevent poisonings** by moving medications, alcohol, cleaning products, bug killers, fertilizers, and fuels to high shelves or cupboards out of reach of children and pets.





5 Carbon Monoxide

(CO) the "silent killer", is an invisible, odorless, and deadly gas. It is created when heating fuels burn incompletely. Heating & cooking equipment, generators, and vehicles running in attached garages can be sources of CO.

Exposure to carbon monoxide can produce symptoms that mimic the flu. Low doses over time, or large amounts at once can be fatal.

WHAT TO DO

- **Install CO alarms** on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas. Test these alarms MONTHLY.
- **Replace batteries** at least annually. A good time is when the clocks are reset in the spring or fall.
- **Properly install fuel burning appliances** that use wood, gas, oil, pellets, and coal, and make sure they are vented properly to the outside. Never heat your house with a gas oven.
- **Know the signs of CO poisoning.** If you suspect CO poisoning, leave your home immediately and call 911.
- **Generators, charcoal grills, gasoline-powered devices, and any unvented** heating sources should be kept 20 feet from the house. They should never be used near or in the house or garage.





6

Mold can grow on almost anything when there's too much moisture. Fixing leaks and controlling dampness is the most important way to prevent mold growth. There are no acceptable levels of indoor mold.

Moisture creates a good environment for bacteria, cockroaches, and dust mites, which can cause allergy and asthma symptoms.

WHAT TO DO

- **Fix plumbing and roof leaks** as soon as possible.
- **Act quickly if you find mold!** The longer it's there, the more damage it will do.
- **Know when you can clean it yourself.** If the area affected is more than 3 x 3 feet, locate a professional at these websites:

  ABIH.org
  ACAC.org
  IICRC.org



- **Use exhaust fans** when cooking and showering. If there is no fan, open the window.
- **Use an air conditioner or dehumidifier** in the summer to reduce humidity. Keep the relative humidity in your home between 40% and 60%.
- **Clean and maintain** air conditioners and dehumidifiers at least monthly.



7

Water from a private well can contain arsenic, radon, and other contaminants linked to cancer and serious illnesses. Many contaminants have no taste, odor, or color. Unlike private wells, water that comes from the town or city is regularly tested. It is important to test your well water frequently for contaminants that can impact your health.

1 in 5 residential wells in New Hampshire contains arsenic, a poisonous chemical that can cause bladder cancer.

WHAT TO DO

- **Know what's in your water.** Test your well water every year for bacteria and nitrates. Test every 3 to 5 years for the state recommended "Standard Analysis."
- **Protect the area around your well from contamination.** Keep the area around your well clean and chemical free. Fertilizers, animal waste, fuel, and oil from parked cars, lawn equipment and recreational vehicles can get into the ground and contaminate your well.
- **Drink & cook with bottled water if your well is contaminated.** Use bottled water or have a qualified technician install a treatment system.





8

Rodents & insects need food, water, shelter, and a way to enter, in order to survive in your house. Aside from being pests, rodents and insects can be an asthma trigger. Instead of depending on pesticides, which contain poisonous chemicals, good pest control requires monitoring, cleaning up, and shutting pests out of the home.

A mouse can fit through a hole the size of a dime.

WHAT TO DO

- **Starve them.** Put a tight lid on your garbage can; put food away and wash dirty dishes daily; put pet food away at night.
- **Parch them.** Remove water sources like plumbing leaks, pet water bowls, and a wet dish drying rack.
- **Clean up.** Regularly wash counter surfaces and clean cooking appliances like the oven and toaster.
- **Seal cracks and crevices** where pests can enter your home.
- **Choose safer "greener" pest control products**. Place all pesticides out of the reach of children.





9

Fires are preventable. Properly install and maintain your smoke alarms. Develop and practice a fire escape plan with your family. Watch out for electrical, kitchen, and home hazards that can make your home more prone to fires and related injuries.

2 out of 3 fire deaths occur in homes that have no working smoke alarms or any kind of alarms at all.

WHAT TO DO

- **Install smoke alarms** on every level of your home, in every bedroom, and outside sleeping areas, including the basement. Test them all MONTHLY.
- **Replace batteries** at least annually. A good time is when the clocks are reset in the spring or fall.
- **Alarms lose their sensitivity** and should be replaced every 10 years.
- **Keep a 3-foot clear zone** around fireplaces, wood stoves, and any heating device or equipment.
- **Develop and practice an escape plan** with family members. Be sure your escape routes are free of clutter.





10

Radon is an invisible, odorless radioactive gas that comes from soil and bedrock including granite. It can enter your home through cracks in the foundation or from your water supply. Overtime, exposure to radon can lead to illness and even cancer. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in New Hampshire. Radon test kits are simple to use. Test your home today and know the risk of radon.

A radon mitigation system, as pictured above, can be used to vent radon gas out of your home.

WHAT TO DO

- **Test your home for radon**. Many easy-to-use test kits are less than $20. Test kits are available at local hardware stores and online.
- **Be sure to test before and after home renovations,** or before the purchase of a new home. In new construction test before the building is complete.
- **Seal floors and cracks** to prevent radon from entering your home and living space.
- **If the radon level is 4 picocuries per liter or higher** in the lowest livable space of your home, hire a qualified radon mitigation contractor.



11

Bed Bugs do not carry disease, but they do feed exclusively on blood once every 5 to 10 days. They are successful hitchhikers, moving from an infested site to furniture, bedding, boxes, and clothing. They multiply at an incredibly rapid pace.



In six months, one bed bug can multiply to over 30,000 bugs.

WHAT TO DO

- **Contact a pest professional or your landlord** immediately. Do NOT treat the situation yourself. If your landlord is not responsive, contact your local code or health officer.
- **Vacuum your mattress, box spring, headboard & floors daily.** Empty the vacuum into a sealed plastic bag and take it outside.
- **Use mattress encasements and Climbups®** to cover the mattress, box spring, and feet of your bed.
- **Do NOT change where you sleep.** Make your bed an "island" by pulling the bed away from the wall. Do not let the bedding touch the floor and remove clutter around and under the bed.
- **Heat clothing and bedding** in the dryer for 20 minutes on high heat to kill bed bugs. Seal the items in plastic bags until after treatment.
- **Don't spread the contamination.** Write "BED BUG INFESTED" on items you are throwing away.



12

Weatherization

helps families reduce their energy bills by improving the energy efficiency of their homes. Low-income families are the most vulnerable to rising fuel costs. Money not spent on heating bills can be used for necessities, like food and medication.

Switching to CFLs & LEDs (the two bulbs pictured above) can help reduce energy bills.

WHAT TO DO

- **Seal holes, cracks, and gaps** throughout your home to prevent air leaks.
- **It takes energy to heat water.** Reduce your water use by only washing full loads of dishes and clothes. Take shorter showers instead of baths. Replace sink and shower fixtures with low flow nozzles and showerheads.
- **Replace old light bulbs** with compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs with the ENERGY STAR label or light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs.
- **Central air conditioning.** For every degree warmer you set it, you will shave 3 to 4 percent from your electric bill for cooling.
- **Install a programmable thermostat** that turns down the heat during the day while you are away.



Finding Resources That Can Help You and Your Family

Lead	800-897-5323	www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/bchs/clpp
Radon	888-372-7341	www.epa.gov/radon www.nrpp.info
Bed Bugs	Dial 211	www.nhbedbugs.org
Rodents & Insects	877-398-4769	extension.unh.edu/Insects-and-Pests
Moisture & Mold	800-438-4318	www.epa.gov/mold
Fire Safety	Call your local Fire Dept.	www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/firesafety
Carbon Monoxide	Dial 911	www.nh.gov/co
Asthma	800-852-3345 x 0855	www.asthmanownh.org
Injuries	877-783-0432	www.chadkids.org/injury_prevention
Tobacco	800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669)	www.trytostopnh.org
Drinking Water	603-271-2513	www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb
Weatherization & Community Action Programs	603-271-2155	www.nh.gov/oep/energy/programs/weatherization/index.htm
Legal Advice	800-639-5290	www.nhlegalaid.org
NH Legal Assistance	800-562-3174	www.nhla.org
Disabilities	800-834-1721	www.drcnh.org
Poison Center	800-222-1222	www.NNEPC.org
Maternal & Child Health/ Home Visiting	603-271-4517	www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/bchs/mch/home.htm
Substance Abuse	800-804-0909	www.nhtreatment.org
NH Health Insurance Marketplace	800-318-2596	www.coveringnewhampshire.org

Call or visit these websites for more information on Healthy Homes